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MEXICAN JOURNAL

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MEXICAN JOURNAL

The Conquerors Conquered

A JOURNAL OF SIX MONTHS IN MEXICO INCLUDING
TRAVELS TO THE PRINCIPAL PARTS OF
THAT COUNTRY; CONVERSATIONS
WITH DISTINGUISHED PERSONALITIES
IN THE ARTS AND PUBLIC LIFE;
ADVENTURES, MISHAPS, REFLECTIONS
AND PHOTOGRAPHS

SELDEN RODMAN

"In a country where theory and practice are so at variance, personal experience becomes the chart by which one is accustomed to steer."
Charles Macomb Flandrau in *Viva Mexico!*

"In Mexico, artists are more important than politicians."
Jawaharlal Nehru

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MEXICAN CHRONOLOGY

Pre-Conquest

c. 1500 B.C.	Beginnings of non-nomadic civilization in Mexico.
c. 500 A.D.	Beginnings of "classic" civilization of Monte Albán (Oaxaca), Teotihuacán (Valley of Mexico), Remojadas (Veracruz region), Maya (Palenque, Yaxchilán, Bonampak), Colima-Jalisco-Nayarít (Pacific Coast).
c. 900	End of "classic" periods. Uxmal, Chichen-Itzá. Toltecs settle in Tula and prepare to migrate to Yucatán.
c. 1200	Peak of Maya-Toltec development, Chichen-Itzá.
1461	Destruction of Mayapan, last Toltec city in Yucatán.
1500	End of Mixtec culture in Valley of Oaxaca. Aztecs subjugate most of central Mexico.

Conquest

1519	Cortés, after skirting Yucatán and Tabasco, lands at Veracruz and conquers the Totonacs at Cempoala. Tlaxcalans defeated. Cholula invested. Entry into Tenochtitlán.
1520	Defeat of Narvaez at Cempoala. Death of Moctezuma. *La Noche Triste* (June 30). Battle of Otumba. Cuauhtémoc becomes last Aztec emperor.
1521	Siege and destruction of Tenochtitlán.
1522	Alvarado subjugates Zapotecs and Mixtecs, founds Oaxaca. Tarascan Empire in western Mexico conquered.
1524	Entry of friars into Mexico City; Cortés permits himself to be publicly scourged by them as example to Indians. Expedition by Cortés to Guatemala and Honduras.
1525	Cuauhtémoc executed.
1531	Apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe to Juan Diego.
1540	Montejo founds Mérida, enslaves the Mayas.
1547	Death of Cortés in Spain.

New Spain

1551 Retirement of Mendoza, first Viceroy; succeeded by Velasco. University of Mexico founded.
1571 Establishment of the Inquisition.
1640 Work begins on Cathedral of Morelia.
1695 Death of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz at age of 64.
1757 Santa Prisca at Taxco built by José de la Borda.
1767 Expulsion of the Jesuits.
1771 Reformist Viceroy Bucareli tries to break *Gachupin* monopoly.
1794 Reform fails with dismissal of liberal Viceroy Gigedo.

Independence

1810 Hidalgo sounds *grito* at Dolores. Fall of the Alhóndiga at Guanajuato. Valladolid (Morelia) captured by revolutionists. Battle of Las Cruces.
1811 Hidalgo defeated at Bridge of Calderón near Guadalajara.
1813 Morelos drafts radical constitution at Chilpancingo. Defeated by Iturbide at Valladolid (Morelia).
1821 Iturbide publishes Plan of Iguala.
1822 Iturbide crowned Emperor.
1824 Iturbide overthrown, killed.
1834 Dictatorship of Santa Anna.
1836 Fall of the Alamo. Santa Anna defeated at San Jacinto.
1843 Santa Anna's leg interred in Cathedral of Mexico with *Te Deums.*
1846 Zachary Taylor takes Monterrey.
1847 Winfield Scott enters Mexico City.
1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: U.S. takes half of Mexico.
1855 Santa Anna expelled. Juárez decrees end of clerical and military privileges.

The Reform

1857 Juárez president.
1858 Juárez driven to Veracruz by clerical-landowner reaction.
1860 Porfirio Díaz and Marcos Perez recapture Oaxaca for Juárez.
1861 Juárez, first civilian to rule Mexico, enters capital in

black carriage. Civil War begins in U.S. European army invades Mexico.

1864 Maximilian emperor. Juárez flees to New Orleans.

1867 Siege of Querétaro. Maximilian executed. Reform begins.

1872 Death of Juárez. Díaz plots revolt.

1876 Díaz's dictatorship begins.

1901 Victoriano Huerta completes subjugation of Mayas in Yucatán and turns territory over to fifty henequen planters.

1909 The Creelman interview. Vasconcelos and others demand freedom. Madero rouses country on anti-reelection speaking tour.

1910 Madero, escaping jail, publishes Plan of San Luis Potosí.

The Revolution

1910 Ciudad Juárez stormed by Villa and Pascual Orozco. Díaz flees into exile. Madero elected president in free election.

1913 The Ten Tragic Days. Madero murdered. Huerta dictator.

1914 Huerta overthrown by Obregón and Villa. Carranza president. Villa and Zapata repulsed. Gamio begins survey of Teotihuacán.

1917 Constitution of Carranza passed but not enforced. Gamio employs Goítia, who paints first revolutionary pictures.

1920 Obregón in power. Vasconcelos establishes school system, gives first mural commission to Montenegro and Guerrero.

1923 Orozco begins frescoes in National Preparatory School; Rivera in Ministry of Education.

1924 Calles succeeds Obregón.

1926 Beginning of the priests' (*Cristeros*) rebellion.

1927 Dwight Morrow appointed American Ambassador to Mexico.

1928 Calles becomes *jefe maximo*. Monolithic ruling party (PNR) created.

1931 Anticlerical legislation. Garrido Canábal's "Red Shirts" in Tabasco.

1932 Caso begins excavation of Monte Alban.

1934	Cárdenas president. Calles in eclipse. Distribution of land begins.
1936	Orozco begins four years' mural work in Guadalajara.
1938	Cárdenas expropriates oil properties. Cedillo rebellion suppressed.
1939	Siqueiros paints "Trial of Fascism" for Electrical Workers' Union.
1940	Ávila Camacho succeeds Cárdenas as president.
1946	Alemán president. Discovery of Bonampak frescoes by Giles G. Healey. Work on University City (O'Gorman Library, etc.) begins.
1952	Ruiz Cortines president. Ruz Llullier discovers King's Tomb at Palenque. Tamayo paints murals at Bellas Artes.
1957	Death of Covarrubias and Rivera.
1958	Lopez Matéos succeeds Ruiz Cortines as President.

MEXICAN JOURNAL

1 APPROACH FROM THE NORTH

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October 21, 1956, A Mountain Village in Tamaulipas

At 7:30 A.M. the sun strikes the hillside covered with red, white, and yellow buildings—all at odd angles. Against the serene blue sky, writhing cacti. In the square, eight bootblacks shining the shoes of eight Mexicans a degree less poor. A boy flattened against a small pine, his toes tangled in the roots which splay out in a six-foot circle cut in the pavement. A candy cart with the legend:

Como y Calla
Tiene Usted sed Pida su Refresco Helado
("*Eat and Shut Up*
If you're thirsty ask for your iced soft drink")

A boy in a red bandanna is dusting an American car—with his head. There are television masts above the stores across the way with the signs "NEVERIA EL POPO" and "JUAN PELUQUERIA." The man with the candy cart is having trouble putting up a parasol. Against a sunlit door a Mexican sprawls in sleep, and up a stone ramp a young girl with a transfigured expression and a halo of sunbeams in her hair holds a skein of silk for her mother, who is winding it.

I take out my camera to capture this mindless beauty. I share her concentration and the man's peace. Two mountain men in *sombreros* eye me with suspicion. They are doing nothing—why am I so busy? The father of a family, whose wife and children are breakfasting on a packing crate in the street, regards

my well-fed, well-shod look with an understandable frown of disapproval. A grizzle of flies divides its attention between the baby's nipple and a slab of uncured beef on a butcher's hook. I anticipate the miseries of dysentery. "Garlic and sapphires in the mud . . ." An American school teacher, pale as a pigeon, drops a penny in the hat of an obsequious beggar in the church door, buys a basket from a vendor—overpaying for it and dusting it off gingerly and conspicuously with a piece of Kleenex. I'll settle for dysentery. But why—?

Odi et amo, the poet says: I hate and I love. I shall describe what I see, admit what I feel; above all, let me not be "guarded"!

* * *

The first look of Mexico from the north is gray and dry. The roads are good. The towns, except for the industrial metropolis of Monterrey, which seems more American than Mexican, are very poor. Our car is a Jeep station wagon, the same vehicle I found so serviceable in Haiti. My wife, Maia, and I take turns driving; our five-year-old daughter, Beebe, who is old enough to enjoy a new country if not to appreciate it, takes care of everything else.

We have been driving—and will continue to drive for two more days—through a no-man's-land which, if it hadn't existed, might have insured a union of our two nations—something that could have rounded out the incomplete personalities of each but which both peoples, I'm sure, devoutly thank God never happened.

This is the vast, semiarid part of Mexico where old Zachary Taylor bungled and blundered his way to victory in 1847 against an army even less prepared for war than our own. Here Pascual Orozco's cavalry burned up the countryside in the early "Wild West" phase of the 1910 revolution; and here, a little later, Pancho Villa's irregulars gave the slip to "Black Jack" Pershing's ill-conceived punitive expedition, singing their song:

> If I must be killed tomorrow
> Then let them kill me today.

Across this cactus land, Madero, the aristocratic idealist, fled north to keep the fires of the 1910 uprising alive from New

Orleans; and fifty years earlier Benito Juárez, "Mexico's Lincoln," had traversed it in a more unimpassioned dignity to set up *his* headquarters in the same American city and direct the resistance against the hapless Habsburg Maximilian, Napoleon III's candidate for empire abroad.

I thought about these history-making excursions as I drove, and will continue to allude to them from time to time in these pages.

One of the objectives of my trip is to verify material for a study of Mexico in terms of the conflicts of personality that have shaped it. Cortés the Conqueror *versus* Moctezuma, the Aztec emperor he conquered; or perhaps Zumárraga, the heroic old bishop who has been falsely accused of burning the Aztec library but who was actually the Indian's most understanding friend in his darkest hour. Then Hidalgo or Morelos *versus* Iturbide, chief protagonists of the 1810 struggle for independence. Juárez and Maximilian at midcentury. Madero and Porfirio Díaz in the climactic year 1910. Calles and Cárdenas in our time. Nor can the "culture heroes," as they call them here, be neglected: José Clemente Orozco *versus* Diego Rivera; or perhaps the still-living José Vasconcelos, Obregón's education minister who made the renaissance in painting possible, confronting one of the great Mexican archeologists. Gamio, Caso, Covarrubias, are still active, and the excitement of their discoveries has contributed to making the past more alive than the present. To re-create the drama which unfolded in the paths of these personalities, it will surely be helpful to see the landscape they saw—and describe it.

But I have another motive in proposing to weave the great moments of Mexico's history into this narrative. I'd like to make the journal itself as personal an account of six months in Mexico as I can. Captivated as I am by history and by every manifestation of the arts, it would not be my kind of book if it were not somewhat weighted by these preoccupations. Yet I hope to do more than visit the battlefields and talk with the artists. Everything I see or hear that bears on the relations of Mexicans with Americans will be recorded. I have preconceptions, of course, but I think they are two-edged. For instance, judging from what I observed on a two-weeks' visit back in 1937, I believe that most Mexicans dislike most Americans and that most Americans

despise most Mexicans. I want to find out why. What I read—and I hope to read everything worth while in English and as much as I can in Spanish before I leave—will become part of the fabric. Flandrau and Mme. de la Barca, whose memoirs of 1905 and 1840 I have so far only sampled, will be my models. But because the Mexico of today has many more dimensions and because my mobility will be vastly greater than theirs, it will be my own fault if I fail to make this journal a more interesting record of a particular place in a particular time.

October 24, San Luis Potosí

Out in the middle of nowhere, yesterday morning, we came suddenly upon a complex of modern buildings—a gaudy caricature of the tiny ultramodern schoolhouses of Mexico that now dominate incongruously each cluster of thatched huts in the remotest village. This grandiose complex was being feverishly adorned with twenty- to thirty-foot-high mosaic murals on the free-standing walls that enclosed it: murals depicting the tribulations of the missionary fathers, sentimental moments in the rise of a tycoon, and God knows what else. The style of this realistic symbolism, like the style of the architecture that supported it, was hard and overbearing. Peons on ladders were piecing it together out of pre-set segments in which the stones had been glued to strips of numbered cardboard. Lifting these out of cartons, the workers appeared to take little interest in what they were doing.

Finding the overseer, we asked him what was going on. It was no more, he said, than one of many "pleasure domes" being erected by Jorge Pasquel, promoter (among other things) of the scandal-ridden Mexican baseball league, for the weekend enjoyment of his friends. Unfortunately, our guide added, Señor Pasquel had died last week before this particular haven had seen any use. An airport had been completed nearby for the owner's private plane, but not the swimming pool or tennis courts.

"You'd like to see the master's bedroom?" he asked, with the shadow of a leer. Conducting us to the second floor of one of the buildings, he threw open massive carved doors. Then he pulled aside dusty sashes and revealed to us perhaps the most ornate voluptuarium between Cecil de Mille's Hollywood and

the late King Farouk's Alexandria. Its décor included hideous historical paintings in colossal gold frames, polar-bearskin rugs, alabaster statuary of satyrs and nymphs, massive mahogany furniture, and a jeweled bed on a dais big enough to accommodate a whole sultan's harem.

I was lucky enough at the hotel this evening to run into an American woman who knew something of Jorge Pasquel. She had met him once in New York, where he had taken her to the Cadillac showroom, paid cash for five convertibles to be shipped to various parts of the world, and driven away in a sixth. She described him as the third richest man in the world and the "trigger man" (money, manipulation, and murder) for ex-President Alemán. He owned a DC-6, a DC-3, a $2,000,000 super-Constellation, and most of Mexico's newspapers, including *Excelsior*. She remarked that he had "rubbed out any number of members of the Alemán machine who had refused to kick in or had threatened to squeal, six of them personally," but he was "charming."

I wondered, as we drove away from this hideaway, past fields of sugar and *mais* still tended by the hand plow, and villages from which neither the beggar nor the cripple had vanished, whether Cárdenas and his successors in the Mexican presidency could have completed the revolution, as often claimed, or whether the ground was merely being sown for a new one. It would certainly be foolhardy and uncharitable to come to any conclusions yet.

October 25

Had lunch with a delightful family of upper-middle-class citizens today. The men spoke English and I was able to learn something about local attitudes from the businessman's point of view. One of them had been a child of eight in 1910 and remembered very well when his father, then governor of the province, had been instructed by Don Porfirio Díaz to imprison Madero. Because thirty-five years of dictatorship had made the Díaz regime "soft," Madero had been permitted walks in the park and eventually talked his custodian into letting him escape, whence he crossed the border into Texas, coming back to accept leadership when the revolution had broken out. Both men regarded

Madero, whose high-pitched voice and pear-shaped black beard they remembered from a visit to Chapultepec Palace, as completely crazy. His revolution succeeded, they said, because the middle classes and the peons were attracted by Madero's promise of the right to vote and of more of a Mexico for the Mexicans. "But they are worse off now—for all the reforms of Carranza, Obregón and Cárdenas—than they were when beer was twenty *centavos* a bottle instead of five *pesos*. For that matter, there was actually less political corruption, though, of course, there was plenty under Díaz too."

I told them of our visit to Jorge Pasquel's *hacienda*. They laughed.

"Jorge Pasquel made his 800,000,000 *pesos* under Alemán. How? Out of politics, of course—how else? Baseball was only his hobby. But you ask whether he could have done the same under Cárdenas. Perhaps not. Cárdenas was personally honest, as honest as a Communist can be, though his brother, Dámaso, made a fortune. Under Alemán *everybody* was better off. Our present president, Ruiz Cortines, may be more honest personally, but plenty of new political fortunes are being made under his nose, and he is too parsimonious to spend money lavishly for the benefit of the whole country as Alemán did with his dams and roads.

"Our kind of people," one of them concluded, "like America and Americans and the American way of doing things—and we think Americans like us, too."

October 27, Guanajuato

We drove here from San Luis Potosí late in the afternoon through some ash-dry mountains spotted, surprisingly, with small lakes. The little towns along the way were very old and still, the peasants in their *sombreros* and *rebozos* standing motionless in the streets—in the shadow of a balcony if there was one. Even the great boulders on the mountainsides looked archaic, with a coppery patina, worn smooth and gently shaped against the blue-ribbed hills.

Guanajuato, at least at night, is incredibly romantic, like Avignon or Florence, with a touch of Port-au-Prince: streets narrow as machete blades, illuminated by iron lanterns on wall

brackets. I'm looking forward to getting out before breakfast with Beebe to take some pictures in the dawn light.

October 28

After breakfast we visited the Alhóndiga de Granaditas, where Hidalgo attacked the royalist garrison on September 28, 1810, and where Juan José del Reyes Martinez ("Pípila"), protecting himself with a gravestone slung on his back, fired the gates. Eight feet inside the wooden portals that have replaced them, a neat square on the pavement marks the spot where Governor Riaño met his death. High on the four corners of the splendid palace, plaques bearing their names have replaced the cages which once held the heads of Hidalgo, Allende, Jiménez, and Aldama.

The storming of this "granary" marked the turning point in Mexico's post-Conquest history. Up to that date, Mexico had rounded out three centuries as a colony of Spain. "New Spain," as she was called then, stretched from Panama to northern California without a break. She was the largest colony in the world, and the richest; her output of silver had doubled the world's supply in 150 years, creating numberless millionaires, yet her annual per-capita income, according to Wilhelm von Humboldt's estimate, was fourteen *pesos!* Excepting Russia, New Spain was the most extensive single territory under one administration on earth. She was also, probably, the most unstable, badly governed, and oppressive such entity anywhere. Of her six million people, considerably more than half (Indians) were slaves in everything but name. A million and a half *mestizos* (mixed bloods) filled the poorer occupations and had just enough education and freedom to resent bitterly the foreign domination of Church and State. Six hundred thousand *creoles* (people born in Mexico of Spanish parentage) were one step further up the social ladder, with considerable education and wealth, but were in turn looked down upon and discriminated against by the real rulers, the Old Spaniards, numbering not more than fifteen thousand. These were the high Church dignitaries, *hacienda* owners, and businessmen, who held almost every office of importance in the colony and were known to all the others by the hated name of *gachupines* (spur wearers, oppressors).

Hidalgo, Allende, and the other leaders of the insurrection were *creoles*. Hidalgo was a parish priest from nearby Dolores: brilliant, humanitarian, fanatical, his head filled with theories of liberation smuggled out of revolutionary France and America. Allende was a young soldier and bullfighter. When they led a mob of fifty thousand Indians armed with scythes, machetes, and old muskets on this city, it was not (at first) to promote social revolution but to protest the outright looting of the colony which had followed Napoleon's invasion of the Mother Country and to demand not independence but a viceroy responsible to the deposed House of Castile.

The sack of Guanajuato, however, marked a turning point in Mexico's history in another sense than the liberation from Spain which it finally led to. Before the mob marched in, Guanajuato was a prosperous silver-mining town of sixty thousand inhabitants. When the burning, looting, and killing were over, the population had been reduced to six thousand, and the city never recovered. It was a pattern that was to be repeated, with variations, for a hundred and twenty-five years. Hidalgo, though he was and deserves to be the hero of the Independence and the first great leader of the social revolution that ultimately released the Indians from peonage, was personally responsible for the pattern of anarchic uprisings under irresponsible *caudillos* that was to bedevil Mexico until the time of Cárdenas. With the "justification" that the Spaniards had originally dispossessed the Indians, Hidalgo sanctioned pillaging and murdering by his followers—over the protest of Allende.

* * *

From Guanajuato we drove the ten-or-so rough, winding miles over Hidalgo's (reverse) route to Dolores. Once, when we lost our way and halted in indecision, a handsome, superbly outfitted *charro* on a black stallion reined in beside us. He dramatized the directions, and when I told him it was Hidalgo we pursued, he gave us half the history of the rebellious *padre*. When he left, Beebe was inconsolable. But when Maia reproached her with infidelity to her 6-year-old boy friend back in Oakland, she insisted indignantly that all she wanted was the black horse and the silver bridle.

A little further along the winding mountain road we looked down upon an "orchard" with "apples" the size of marbles. Half a dozen Mexicans in their Sunday best were in the branches tossing handfuls of the fruit to their wives or girls who sprawled on the ground, eating, laughing, and singing.

Quite unexpectedly, Dolores appeared around a curve, dusty, empty, dominated by its historic church. It was here, a few days before the march on the Alhóndiga, that Hidalgo rang the bell and gave his famous *grito:* "Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe! Death to bad government! Death to the *Gachupines!*" There is a legendary symbolism in that cry—and a moral for Mexico, if you like. In recognizing the Virgin who had appeared to Juan Diego, a humble Aztec Indian, outside Mexico City in 1531, Hidalgo was instinctively making the choice that has been made by millions of poor Mexicans ever since—that had been made, in fact, ever since Cortés kicked over the native idols and enforced Christianity at the point of the sword. The smartest man in Christendom was the man who recognized the fact that this miraculous appearance of the Virgin to a poor Indian was the only possible means of affording a transition from the old religions to the new—and of reconciling, through religion, the native with his fate as a conquered beast of burden. When Hidalgo rang the great bell, strode out of the crowded church, and seized a banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe as his battle standard, he was not only subtly reconciling religion and revolution; he was perhaps unconsciously attempting to justify his own defection from the Roman hierarchy.

As far back as 1800, when he had been rector of the University of Valladolid (now Morelia), Hidalgo had been brought before the authorities for "Jansenist" heresies. Jansenism was only a pretext for indicting unorthodoxy, for no one could have been less a puritan than the pleasure-loving *padre.* The easy-going Church of that time might condone Hidalgo's moral lapses —his dancing, his card playing, his bowling in the streets, even his mistresses and his four illegitimate children. After he had received mild censure and taken over the parish of Dolores, they could accept his benevolent camaraderie with the Indians; the brick kilns, pottery workshop, beekeeping, and silk industry he developed for them. (It was the civil authorities who tore up

his mulberry trees.) What the Church could *not* accept was Hidalgo's "liberal enlightenment" philosophy, his surreptitious reading of Voltaire and Rousseau, his calling the Church scholars "a pack of donkeys," his denial of the absolute authority of the Pope, and his questioning the existence of hell.

I thought of this in the great square in front of the Cathedral, where on each anniversary now the president of Mexico comes to renew the ringing of the bell; I thought also of Emperor Maximilian, the Habsburg usurper who, by a curious stroke of irony, stood in the same place to address a wildly cheering throng of royalists half a century after Hidalgo. Both were kind-hearted men and courageous, and both met death before a firing squad: Hidalgo because he was a little ahead of his time, Maximilian because he was a little behind it. Both "failed" because of being naive in the ways of power; and so did Madero, a greater spirit than either, for the same reason in 1913. The men who understood power—Iturbide, Díaz, Obregón—"succeeded." Or did they? Isn't it the visionaries who have given Mexico what makes it so individualistic, unorthodox, and beautiful?

October 29, San Miguel de Allende

This ancient hill town, to which the name of Hidalgo's lieutenant was later appended, is said to be preserved in its pristine picturesqueness by edict of the federal government. It looks it—a little *too* picturesque. It has been taken over by American tourists, art students (Instituto Allende, housed in the spacious baronial palace), and winter sun worshipers. We saw a sampling of all three during the day.

No sooner had we unloaded in the lobby of the Hotel San Miguel than a sandy-haired young man in a starched shirt stuck his head out of a bedroom door and asked me if I could tie a bow tie. While I was tying it for him he discoursed condescendingly on the state of local bullfighting ("It's disgustingly provincial") and remarked that he had just completed a first novel which is to be published in New York.[1]

[1] I heard later that the young man disappeared in November after forging a check. Examination of his luggage revealed that he was wanted in several states as a forger, under assumed names, and that he had stolen the manuscript of the novel from a friend and sold it to a well-known publisher as his own.

We had breakfast with another sandy-haired American, a pretty, blue-eyed, freckle-faced girl who spoke with an attractive drawl; she was killing time studying art while a young manganese tycoon in the capital was making up his mind whether to marry her. Presently we were joined by a loose-jointed, bearded youth from California, idealistic and intense, who was studying art on the GI Bill but talked of becoming a farmer in Israel. His name was Marty Hamos. The friend he was traveling with, Hal Cohen, is also bearded and intense, but short, dark, and realistic. When they heard that I was planning a trip to Oaxaca soon, they asked if they might come along.

We drove with them to the Instituto, where Stirling Dickinson, the director, telephoned Patzcuaro to make reservations for us to see the Fiesta of the Day of the Dead on Friday. We met James Pinto there also, the instructor in painting, who invited us to his house after dinner. Later, at the hot spring a few miles out of town where we drove for a swim, we met two attractive middle-aged ladies of leisure who invited us to their house for dinner. No sooner had they left when a young woman and her daughter came to the pool and it turned out that *her* husband was about to have his first novel published by Harper. The two older ladies had been complaining that an article in this month's *Coronet*, claiming that you can "live like a king" in San Miguel for $40 a month, would make the town unbearable.

* * *

Dinner with the two ladies and a somewhat younger American writer of detective stories who is staying with them. He had met me in Haiti in 1948, he said, and he talked at great length of the "genius" of a certain sculptor there. When I hinted that the sculptor's work had never impressed me, he at first frowned, then said: "By God, that explains it!"

"Explains what?"

"The power tool I gave him. It must have corrupted him. With a jackknife he was tremendous. It *must* have been the power tool!"

We concluded the evening with calls on the Pintos and a talented young New Jersey artist named Don Bloom, whose wife also paints. Pinto has a beautiful home built around a patio,

embellished with his own paintings and his wife's orchids. But two staggering drawings by Rico Lebrun, who had taught at the Instituto two years ago, dominated everything.

The Blooms told a story which could serve as plot for a novel about San Miguel; considering the number of novelists around, perhaps it already has. It seems an American couple living just outside the town has gone completely native. They live in a mud-and-wattles hut, dirt floor, no stove, no furniture, piles of rushes for beds, not even an outhouse. She's a once-bleached blonde "who goes off her rocker now and then"; he paints, "but not much." They don't wear clothes during the day, though the wall around their patch of ground is not high. They have goats, chickens, and a cow and appear to be perfectly contented. The thing that shocks the Blooms is their indifference to what goes on in the rest of the world; their lack of ambition to change, improve, or create anything. Flashbacks in the novel could tell how they got that way. The Blooms, with their contagious American optimism and determination to conquer the world, could be countersymbols.

October 30, Querétaro

The drive from San Miguel de Allende was through a dry, spacious valley enclosed by dust-colored mountains. Soon maguey gave way to peach orchards and, near Celaya, to rice paddies. In Celaya I missed the massive, ornamental doors of San Miguel, the four-square stone houses with their flowery gardens. We saw a monument to a local architect-painter, one Tresguerras, erected in 1951. The inscription made me wonder whether the United States had financed it. It began: "This monument cost $57,000 . . ."

The church at Apaseo el Alto, where we stopped to have lunch, is crowned with a row of golden angels that look as though they had just alighted from heaven. But we were brought down to earth at the Hill of Bells outside Querétaro. Peons were skinning a huge bull that had died, they told us, in the act of mounting its first cow. Not much of a bull, they said scornfully, showing us its equipment to prove their contention. We hadn't come to see this, though it was a better subject for

photography than the perfunctory chapel erected to mark the spot where Maximilian and his generals were shot on Juárez's orders in 1867.

I have never doubted that Juárez was a great man and Maximilian a weak one, pitifully unprepared for the role in which Napoleon III cast him; yet in the drama of Querétaro it is Maximilian who comes out well and Juárez poorly. For one thing, Juárez was not here while the siege was going on. He preferred to leave the military operations to others—Escobedo, Riva Palacio, Porfirio Díaz. When he does appear, it is at a distance, like some grim, inflexible schoolmaster, watching in stony silence as the beautiful Princess Salm (American wife of one of Maximilian's officers) throws herself at his feet and offers to die in the Emperor's place if he is permitted to return to Europe. "I am grieved, Madam, to see you on your knees before me, but if all the kings and queens of Europe were in your place I could not spare that life. It is not I who take it; it is the people and the law. And if I should not do its will, the people would take it, and mine also."

There is no doubt that the people of Querétaro, at least, took the kind, well-meaning Maximilian to their hearts. Not here the frigid reception of the Emperor's landing at Veracruz, or the cynical apathy of the capital so inured to the mock heroics of the Iturbides and Santa Annas. The bells rang, and the belles leaned over the balconies of this royalist stronghold when he entered it on February 19 with his army of 8,000. A month later, when Juárez's besieging force had swelled to 40,000 and the aqueduct had been cut and they were serving cat pie at the best tables (including the Emperor's), the townspeople still loved him, taxed themselves to pay his army's wages, thought nothing of melting down the church bells for cannon and shot. They loved especially Maximilian's reckless bravery—his walks in the convent courtyard within plain view of the enemy gunners while shot rained about him—and his democratic behavior, as he promenaded the streets without a guard and asked strangers for a light when his pipe went out. He endeared himself to the common soldier, too, by checking on his rations and pay which the cruel Márquez, "The Tiger of Tacubaya," was too indiffer-

ent to care about, Miramón above thinking about, or Mendes and Mejía, the two full-blooded Indian generals, too busy quarreling with each other to attend to. On their own, the soldiers decorated him for bravery.

But it was at the inevitable end, when Colonel Lopez had betrayed the citadel to the Juaristas for a handful of silver, that Maximilian looked best. Here on the Hill of Bells, on the seventy-first day of the siege, he surrendered to Escobedo's men with his staff, including the brave Salm, who almost effected his escape. (Agnes Salm even offered her body to the prison commander when she thought that the genuineness of Maximilian's bribe was being questioned.)

Maximilian's last two messages to Juárez—one a request that Miramón and Mejía be spared, the other a letter urging the Liberal leader to reconcile all Mexicans without bloodshed—make one forget the Black Decree he was duped into signing the year before and the hours spent composing his ridiculous Court Ceremonial. As he passed to the firing squad, the people of Querétaro again appeared on their balconies, in mourning, weeping openly. He gives the place of honor in the center to the brave Miramón; comforts Mejía who is scarcely well enough to stand up, handing him his smelling salts; gives what little gold remains to the execution party, with the injunction reminiscent of Hidalgo's fifty years before: "*Muchachos*, aim well; aim right here." Then a few words to the onlookers: "I forgive everybody. I pray that everybody may also forgive me. And I wish that my blood, about to be shed, may be for the good of the country. Viva México! Viva la Independencia!" Manet's great picture takes care of the rest.

As the body was carried back through the town from the Hill of Bells, a well-dressed woman forced her way past the cordon, stabbed an officer to the heart, and escaped in the crowd, which refused to let her be pursued. There remains the ugly story of the embalming of the Emperor's body by quack undertakers who turned it black and hung it for weeks by the flesh on a butcher's hook. And finally of Juárez, creeping back into Querétaro months later to remark smugly, after a long, satisfied look at the remains of his enemy: "It doesn't smell too bad after all."

November 2, Patzcuaro

We arrived here in a proper mood for the Fiesta of the Dead, only to find out that it took place last night. Dickinson got his dates mixed. The drive from Mexico City, where we stopped just long enough to leave Beebe with a family of old friends, the Demarests, in Coyoacán, took seven hours instead of the three we had figured on from the maps. (The thousand blind curves don't show.) Leaving the capital, we descended (though much of the time it seemed that we were climbing) through cactus, hemlock, eucalyptus, banana, poplars, pine, maguey, cornfields, willow, and spruce—an astonishing assortment! At Toluca's famous market (where, though still unknown to us, the Day of the Dead had already been celebrated) we examined left-over skulls made of candy and soap, for the children, and *calaveras* (complete skeletons) animated with string to play little guitars. I photographed a white skull painted on a black wall to which the dirty word *puto* had been added as a final gesture of defiance. Climbing one of the pine-covered mountains beyond Toluca, we passed a crowd wearing masks, brandishing black parasols, and carrying a mock coffin. They would drop the coffin from time to time and, as it crashed to the ground, laugh uproariously. How healthy is the Mexican attitude toward death, and how remote from our lugubrious solemnity!

There followed a region of gently rounded hills, close-cropped and streaked with footpaths. The roofs of the shepherds' shanties are held down against the wind with stones. Some of the distant mountains are shaped like truncated pyramids. Was this the inspiration of the pre-Columbian pyramid, with its temple and sacrificial altar on the flat top? At Zitacuarro, poinsettias were in bloom.

Morelia, the capital of Michoacán province, is a small city of imposing palaces and stately churches at the foot of another range of mountains lying between it and Lake Patzcuaro. The buildings are mostly of pink and yellow stone, superbly weathered and homogeneous, and I made a mental note to spend some time here later.

Beyond Morelia, the valley becomes incredibly rich: the earth

first black, then red, and well irrigated. *Cassauate* trees with white blossoms, and the ever-present, pungent little yellow flower which the Indians call *cempoalxochitl* (the color yellow was the Aztec symbol for death) and which sometimes carpets entire mountainsides, add to the richness.

At Tzintzuntzan ("place of the hummingbird," capital of the ancient Tarascan empire) we inspected a pre-Columbian pyramid and a UNESCO save-the-art-of-weaving project and bought some of the gaily painted plates for which this part of Michoacán is famous. At Quiroga, where the road turns south to Patzcuaro, we bought more. In fact, at every roadside stand a brilliant new image would catch our eye, and our resolve to be reasonable would break down. When we finally reached the Hotel Dolatri at Patzcuaro we were so tired that a juke box just outside our room disturbed us not a bit and we couldn't have cared less that the Day of the Dead was over.

* * *

Next morning at dawn we hired a launch to have a look at Janitzio Island and the fishermen with their celebrated butterfly nets. A fine mist hung over the big lake. The water was dead calm and clouded. Reeds and what seemed to be orchids choked the margins. The local fish (*charales*) are about four inches long, shaped like sardines and in color somewhere between translucent jade and a sliver of moonlight. You can actually see through them, only the eyes and alimentary tract being opaque. The fishermen, when not maneuvering their poetic nets, hunt the small local duck with a three-pronged spear. Nothing has changed since Tarascan times.

Janitzio was wreathed in a dazzling cloud. But finally this lifted enough to reveal not only the fishermen's homes and graveyards but the colossal statue of Morelos which now crowns the height. It was Padre Morelos who assumed the burden of the Indian revolution after Padre Hidalgo's execution. He carried the social part of it a good deal further. Ex-President Cárdenas, himself a native of Michoacán, caused this monument to the great guerrilla leader to be erected. It is said that he wanted the Tarascans never to forget who had first fought (and died) to give them the land. He returned to them the ancient, com-

munally held tracts (*ejidos*), regarding this as the completion of Morelos' work.

The cloud settled back on Janitzio, leaving visible only Morelos' stone head, but it was not hard to visualize the spectacle we had missed November 1, when the islanders begin their all-night vigil in the flower-banked cemeteries and myriad dancing candle flames are reflected across the black waters.

2 FIRST GLIMPSES OF THE CAPITAL

Bullfight—Visit with Juan O'Gorman—Election Night—First Look at the Murals—A Gloomy Footnote on the Muralists—Diego Rivera Talks Back—Ralph Roeder Looks Back—Rivera Again—Some Opinions of Orozco—Covarrubias and the Receding Past—Siqueiros at Home—Picturesque Discomfort

November 5, Mexico

Why is it that the Mexican, so easy-going, so disdainful of time, so excessively polite, becomes, behind the wheel of a car, crazy with power, speeding even in crowded city streets and so ruthless when confronted with a timid pedestrian or a bewildered foreign driver that it seems he has an obsessive impulse to kill at any cost?

I asked Don Demarest this question as we were driving to a bullfight this afternoon, hugging the *glorietas* (traffic circles) in a desperate effort to avoid being sideswiped by the more frenzied local individualists. Demarest, an American novelist, old friend, and tolerant student of the Mexican psyche, had an answer: "The need to prove he is *muy macho*—all man."

The same need is expressed in the bull ring. But I'll concede that physical discomfort may have tempered my enjoyment of the spectacle, as it did during my initiation back in 1937. Pleasure and pain are inseparable in my memory of that visit when I visited Diego Rivera, watched Leon Trotsky leap to his feet and shout, "The interview is TERMINATED!" when I asked him whether dialectical materialism wasn't unscientific, and attended my first *corrida*—all with dysentery. Happily, it's only a severe cold this time. But the fight, a *novillada*, seemed boring as well as cruel. The bulls, blindfolded for hours before their entrance (and perhaps sandbagged as well?), never had a chance. The beauty of the fight *as spectacle* (once they have removed the giant Pepsi-Cola bottle from the center of the ring) cannot be denied. But

the artistry of the *matadors?* With experience one would be as conscious of artistry as in watching McDougald and Coleman execute a double play or Jackie Robinson steal home—but does death's proximity increase one's pleasure? Not mine. I'm filled with too much apprehension that something fatal will happen to the participants—or is it guilt, as I hope secretly that the bull will triumph? Maia, an *aficionada* from way back, and Don, who has lived in Mexico so long that only the insensibility of the newcomer offends him, did their best to straighten me out.

As we were leaving the ring, I asked Don a less serious question, prompted by the efforts of a dozen kids to sell us everything from souvenir horns to the actual ears and tail. "Why is it," I said, "that little boys in places frequented by tourists invariably come up to one and ask *in English:* 'Do you speak Spanish, Mister?' "

* * *

On the way home, the Demarests took us to a party at Juan O'Gorman's. O'Gorman is an architect-mosaicist-painter (happy combination!) who has created an architectural style as personal —some would say as eccentric—as Antoni Gaudi's. His home in San Angel is literally carved out of a gray volcanic cliff. The rough stone provides part of the interior texture; subtly toned mosaics of native animals and pre-Conquest gods, the rest. The mosaics, being relatively high and in shadow, don't become obtrusive. *Retablos* (religious ex-votos painted on tin by popular artists) and Tarascan figurines complete the décor. A curtain of woven corn leaves from Oaxaca covers the glass door. A winding stair, consisting of four-foot slabs of stone embedded in the curving wall, with no balustrade or other support, leads to the second floor and tower studio. Helen O'Gorman, the architect's American wife, descended from these upper reaches, where she had been working on a book about flowers and where she keeps a superb collection of Mexican needlework, to pour tea.

O'Gorman told us that Frank Lloyd Wright had given the house his nod on a recent visit, and when asked if he thought it derived from his own style, had answered: "No. It's truly organic, and therefore original." O'Gorman is very scathing on

the subject of the ubiquitous Mies-modern that is rapidly taking over the city. He feels it is unrooted in Mexico and symptomatic of urban man at his most intellectual. His implication—there is an effigy of the Toltec culture-hero Quetzalcoatl spotlighted in the garden—is that Mexicans must find their roots among the pre-Columbian gods or perish in the faceless maelstrom of modernism. But the exterior of O'Gorman's house, with its gigantic mosaicked idols flanking the entrance, rather than looking indigenous has a little bit the air of an importation from Disneyland—self-conscious folklore and *in*organic architecture.

I asked O'Gorman how much architecture in Mexico he regarded as truly Mexican. Modestly ignoring his own home, and his great mosaic-covered Library at the University which has become almost *the* symbol of the new Mexico, he replied: "None. Except perhaps the University Stadium, designed by Perez Palácios with an assist from Diego Rivera. Why? Because it uses an earthwork structure as old as the pyramids, to save steel and concrete costs, and does it gracefully. As for the rest—well, three men, Corbusier, Gropius, and Mies, invented 'functional architecture' in Europe. Then it came to you, and to us. How can it be original?"

The paradox is that it was O'Gorman himself who introduced functional purism into Mexico! As Rivera's disciple in the twenties, it was he who first demanded an architecture wholly exempt from esthetic intentions—the fruit of "science" and "technique" applied in a strictly utilitarian manner. As a founder of the Superior School of Engineering, he excluded cultural subjects from the curriculum and defined architectural composition as "the natural result of a rational process based on technique."

Just before leaving I summoned up nerve to ask O'Gorman to explain his two lives as an architect. It really didn't take nerve, come to think of it, because O'Gorman is just about as friendly, humorous, and disarmingly frank a person as I've encountered. His perfect English, with just the touch of a brogue, his tweeds, and his wife who perhaps serves tea so there won't be any danger of the guests toppling off that bannisterless staircase, complete the charm. He put it this way:

"When I graduated in 1927 from architectural school, the idea of functionalism—a maximum of efficiency with a minimum of labor—seemed a necessity for a poor country. Besides, functionalism was a novelty, a way of destroying academic attitudes. We were romantics, iconoclasts, and don't forget that in technologically backward countries technology is embraced with *passion*. It's a mystic idea, a substitute for religions on the way out. (My Irish father, by the way, was a religious atheist; my mother Mexican.) Because of the dearth of talent here, we couldn't imitate Wright; but we could improve on Gropius. My colleague Legarreta (he died young) and I insisted that architecture have nothing to do with art, being a necessity rather than a luxury. So I built thirty 'functional' schools here in the Federal District and a big one in Tampico; and in 1930 I lectured with José Antonio Cuevas, builder of the revolutionary Lottery Building with its floating foundations and cactuslike double vault; and finally, in 1937, realizing I was in a blind alley and that all of us were copying the functionalists badly—applying the forms derived from its principle merely for their esthetic effect—I gave up architecture for the time being and devoted myself to painting. I took it up again only when I saw the possibility of working in Wright's direction.

"One of these days," he concluded, "let's take a trip together through the Pedregal Gardens further down this road and I'll show you at least what Mexican architecture *shouldn't* be!"

November 7

If I have failed to mention the terrible events of the past few weeks—the eruptions in Poland and Hungary, the brutal suppression of self-determination in the latter country, and the half-hearted Anglo-French-Israeli assault on Egypt—it has only been because comment on them in these pages would seem to be out of place. We stayed up late last night at the American Club to hear a by-product of U. S. abdication in the face of these events, the defeat of Adlai Stevenson under the second Eisenhower landslide that has engulfed him.

Alma Reed was there, joining us among the disheartened Democratic minority, and we exchanged a few preliminary re-

marks about Orozco, to whose memory she has just paid tribute in a book.

Around 3:00 o'clock Maia and I left with two American boys to get our car from an underground garage on Avenida Juárez. It couldn't be found. Finally the harassed attendant pointed to a moving vertical belt with handholds that acted as an escalator through circular holes in the various floors. We had had enough drinks to be in exactly the mood for it. We grabbed hold, traveling to the top floor and leaping off there to avoid hitting the roof. We sighted the car but, being without the keys, jumped back on the belt. This time the weight was too much for it. Something gave way and we descended at alarming speed. One of the Americans and I leaped off at the bottom level, shouting to Maia and the other boy, "Jump for your lives!" Maia made it, but the boy couldn't detach himself and disappeared in a black hole in the floor. Happily he soon reappeared and we all got on the contraption again, this time with the attendant, who had slowed it down, and arrived at our car. Of course the attendant had forgotten to bring up the keys; but by this time we were laughing too hysterically to care.

November 8

Spent the day taking a first look at Mexican mural art and came to the conclusion that, with the exception of Tamayo, whose murals in the Bellas Artes have at least extraordinary subtlety of color and form, the movement has lost whatever it had in the twenties and thirties. The Orozcos of that period in the National Preparatory School, and to a certain extent the early Riveras in the Ministry of Education, may be compared with all but the very greatest Italian Renaissance murals, having a genuine springtime innocence and eloquence, but I was appalled by what I saw in the National Palace. Rivera's mammoth historical catch-all in the stairwell, I had seen in 1937. It's a remarkable *tour de force* but already foreshadows the degeneration to come in its illustrative didacticism. The real shocker was in what Rivera has done from 1943 on, in the loggias upstairs. With all the emphasis on picturesqueness, a loss of convincing *scale* becomes noticeable. The backgrounds are fruity, the skies

tinted like Maxfield Parrish, the episodes contorted with "unearned emotion." The artist's greater knowledge, his emphasis on archeology and "authentic" Aztec lore, fancy plumage, and weird instruments of torture contribute to the curio-shop effect. Propaganda—the presentation of the Conquistadors as deformed monsters, of Malinche's blue-eyed papoose, and so on —makes the result laughable rather than moving. Is it that, with weakening of conviction, loss of taste follows?

I had a talk this afternoon with a well-known dealer who has handled most of the Mexicans. He told me that Diego had been keeping several mistresses happy after Frieda's death until, last year, a cancer developed where calculated to interfere most with this activity. The "capitalist" doctors had wanted to amputate, but the painter had flown to the Soviet Union where he had received at least a partial cure, returned, married his present wife, and started to paint again with renewed "faith."

Tamayo is in New York, where he now lives most of the year.

Covarrubias is in the hospital undergoing surgery for ulcers "because his wife refuses to give him a divorce. He wants to marry a young dancer."

Siqueiros is painting murals in Poland and lecturing in the U.S.S.R.

Goítia is "completely crazy" in Xochimilco.

"What do you feel about the present state of Mexican art?" I asked him. He lowered his voice. "Frankly, it's hopeless," he said. "The vital art is being produced in your country today; but no Mexican will admit it—or even look at it. It's a point of honor with us that no art can possibly come from across the border. From Spain, yes; from France, perhaps; but from the U. S.—never!"

November 9

Spent the morning with Diego Rivera and the afternoon with Juan O'Gorman.

"No," Diego greeted me, "I don't remember you from your visit here in 1937 but I remember you very well with Ben Shahn and Lincoln Kirstein on the scaffolding at Rockefeller Center

three years before that." He was at work on a large, gaily tinted portrait of a society woman. Presently there entered a delegation of Indonesian Communist artists. Its leader unveiled a painting he was carrying. It was a piece of abstract symbolism on the hydrogen bomb, consisting of a heart pierced by a dagger against a mushroom cloud. Diego looked at this monstrosity for some time and then cooed: "Very interesting arrangement of shapes and colors!"

The high studio on Alta Vista, which occupies the top floor of one of two buildings connected by a bridge which the artist owns, is hung with dozens of marvelously constructed and painted "Judases" and "Calaveras" (skeletons). They are all the work of Carmen Caballero, a peasant woman now living in the suburb of Maria Magdalena whose entire output Diego buys. The shelves are loaded, as they were in 1937, with magnificent Tarascan and Aztec statuary, a small selection from the immense collection Diego is said to be cataloguing for an ultimate gift to the nation. Diego himself, talking while he paints, is as unspoiled, alert, and friendly as ever—deepening the puzzle of what has happened to his art.

I had started to smoke when I observed a "No Fumar" sign. It was his eyes, he told me, an infection. I offered him an antibiotic that had cured an infection in my eyes on the trip down. He declined it politely. "I would be blind now, totally blind, if the Soviet doctors had not given me an ointment." He smiled. "The capitalist doctors would like to see me blind."

Some friends of mine told me the other day that they had been among the crowd that welcomed Diego and his wife back on their return from Russia in May. The temperature at the airport had been 90° and the Riveras had emerged from the plane staggering under Russian fur coats and hats, sweating like pigs. Yet Diego, whose banal paintings of the "happy" Soviet workers, rosy-cheeked and laughing as they shovel snow, are now selling for 50,000 *pesos* at the local Galería Diego Rivera, is said to be still accusing Tamayo of having "sold out" to American millionaires!

Several years ago, when Alex Eliot of *Time* asked Diego about his Trotskyite period, he had said: "Those writings were just a trick to mislead the stockholders of Bethlehem Steel." To

me he said: "I was never a Trotskyite. I was simply a member of the Communist Opposition. Today the Opposition has deposed Stalinism and is in power!" But then—perhaps thinking of how the Party would regard this boast: "Of course I made mistakes then, many mistakes. Errors of analysis."

What had brought about the difference, I asked him, between his highly stylized murals of 1921–1928 and his superrealistic ones of today in the National Palace?

"Today, as in 1921," he began, "Mexico is a half-colonial country under the heel of the United States. The 1921 murals were programmatic and allegorical, though their subject was the Mexican bourgeois and proletarian revolutions. My National Palace murals on the other hand depict, with realistic and real faces, all the elements of Mexican history going to show the need for social revolution. In the Ministry of Education I took few risks. I would never have dared, as I do in the National Palace, to show Calles flanked by a banker and an archbishop." (I could have reminded him that in the second instance Calles was in no position to protest, being in exile or dead; but Diego was talking too rapidly to brook interruption.)

"They tell me," he went on, "that the American tourists like the new murals better—as if that were a reproach. I paint for everybody. Next year some of these tourists will be socialists because of what they have seen. As for the critics, I'm proud and happy that they don't like the new murals. They didn't like the Ministry of Education while I was painting it either. Perhaps [a sly falsetto giggle] they are the same critics!"

His present project, Diego said, is to finish the National Palace. "I've been at it twenty-five years. It may take another twenty-five." The government pays only on completion of each mural, he added. "They suspect me; I suspect them! I'm not leaving them my collections, for example; I'm leaving them to the Mexican people, the foundation to be administered by a committee and the National Bank. We have one very good law here that makes it possible for the people's interests to be protected in such cases. You ask if it is my tomb? That is foolish question. You believe what my enemies say or what I say? I say it is a home for the collections—no more. What do I care about a tomb when I am still alive?" and he guffawed,

holding his immense belly with his fingers spread to keep it from shaking too much. "They think this building in the Pedregal is my tomb because it's completely Mexican!"

* * *

O'Gorman doesn't agree with me at all that Diego's recent work suffers from a lapse of taste.

"The National Palace murals are different, not inferior. Diego once said to me: 'They are beginning to approach the calendar art the masses truly appreciate, which (for that reason) is what I want to make them. If you want to converse with the masses, how presumptuous it would be to offer something they don't understand—just because the bourgeois intellectuals and art critics think it is in better taste! I myself now realize that my early work, like the Ministry of Education frescoes, failed to communicate with the masses because it was stylized and allegorical to meet certain irrelevant canons of Renaissance and Modern taste!' "

O'Gorman went along with this esthetic. "After all," he said, "who is to say that you are right and Diego is wrong—or, for that matter, that Bouguereau is inferior to Tintoretto? The theory of relativity is provable. The atomic bomb 'proved' it, didn't it? But art is never provable. Tastes change and one man can never prove that his is superior to another man's. Renoir and other great painters looked at Seurat's *Grande Jatte* and pronounced it a demonstration in needlepoint. Pavlov made his mice (and we are only a slightly more advanced species in the animal kingdom) drool over the color red or a blue triangle, through conditioned reflex. Is it any different than the way we have been conditioned to pronounce the Sistine Chapel 'good' art and Norman Rockwell 'bad'? Diego is at least honest in setting a higher premium on what his public demands of him than on what a small body of 'conditioned' critics would like him to turn out. I myself say 'This is what I like' and therefore 'This is what I shall produce.' Diego is perhaps less self-centered, less subjective."

We talked of Orozco, about whom he had opinions just as unorthodox. While agreeing with me that Orozco was the greatest artist among the Mexicans, he called him, as a man, "a

walking bundle of prejudices and inconsistencies." It was incredible but true, he said, "that José Clemente was incapable of talking rationally or thinking rationally about anything. I often asked him before and after the war why he wore a Swastika button in his lapel. He wore it, he told me, because Roosevelt, Churchill, and especially Stalin were mankind's greatest scourges, and because the Jews deserved to be exterminated. 'I would like to paint a mural of Hitler as the Saviour of Mankind on the largest wall in Mexico!' he told me once. 'Then why don't you, José Clemente?' I asked him. 'You have always painted precisely what you believed in before.' 'Because,' he replied, 'it would never be permitted in Mexico, where those three have poisoned the air, and I must continue to live and paint in Mexico.' "

Orozco had picked up this line of reasoning, O'Gorman thought, either from the Sinarquistas or from Dr. Atl, the "Father of Mexican Painting," who at the time was thought to be a vociferous propagandist for his old friend Benito Mussolini.

Unbelievable? We'll see. . . .

November 10

Ralph Roeder says to believe nothing you hear in Mexico; the same informant will give you the exact opposite the second time around.

Juárez's biographer, whom I had met twenty years ago on Martha's Vineyard when he was writing *Man of the Renaissance*, lives in a 1929-modern apartment in Rio de la Plata. His wife, a White Russian who helps him with his research, says: "Our life is very busy. We get up at 6:00, seat ourselves back there in the study next to each other, and start typing. All day, every day, it's the same." Roeder gives a faintly embarrassed smile. He is blond, blue-eyed, thin, with features so sensitive and a skin so exquisitely translucent that there seems to be no flesh or bones beneath them. The Mexicans have paid him the unprecedented tribute of accepting his monumental study of their national hero as the standard biography. I haven't read it yet, but it must be eulogistic indeed.

He told (after much coaxing) the story of his first visit to Mexico. It took place in 1912 when he was a young teacher out of (John Reed's) Harvard looking for life. One day he read

about the Mexican Revolution and, fortified with absinthe ("which alone kept me in the classroom"), decided to see it for himself. Crossing the Texas border and going to a point where the tracks had been torn up, he began to walk through the desert. Half dead with fatigue and thirst, he finally came to another stretch of track and boarded a Mexican train. He didn't realize he was under arrest until one of the soldiers came up to him and pulled out Roeder's watch. "But I don't want to sell it," he said. "You might as well," said the soldier good-naturedly, "because in an hour you'll be dead." Only then did he begin arguing with Pascual Orozco's troops, trying to convince them he was no spy but a would-be revolutionist. When they were finally convinced, they put him on another train, headed back for the American border. An American had been accidentally killed the week before and they wanted no pretext for American intervention. Roeder's first and only direct experience of Mexican politics had come to an end. However, when he reentered the United States and required identification, he pulled out a card and handed it to the border official. On it, under his name he had written (in the moment of his gravest peril) the words: "UNJUSTLY KILLED."

November 11

This morning I looked up my old friend Miguel Covarrubias, whom I hadn't seen in almost as long as Ralph Roeder. He was just out of the hospital. I would hardly have recognized him—hollow-eyed, yellow-skinned, gray-haired—as the bouncy, cosmopolitan cartoonist of the late twenties. We exchanged looks and I asked him to bring me up to date on his new life as an archeologist.

"There it is!" he said, smiling painfully and pointing at the rows of superb stone and ceramic figurines in the bookcases across the room. "Some of it, anyway. I'll be lucky if I ever see the rest."

He told me that he thought his principal contribution to the field had been in helping push back the "frontiers" of Middle America a thousand years or more. "Of course, it has been the recent discoveries—and the archeologists: Gamio, Caso, Vaillant, Stirling, Moreno, and many others—that have done it. We used

to think that Teotihuacán was a Toltec ruin; now we know that it was the center of a brilliant civilization predating the Maya, a civilization that was destroyed before the Toltecs came down out of nowhere and built Tula. Even before Teotihuacán, Monte Alban was flourishing. And perhaps the wonderful artists we now call 'Olmec' came even before these great civilizations!"

"Which would be about the year—?"

He went into the complexities of computing time past, the wide divergence of systems accepted by reputable authorities, the fallibility of even the carbon-14 tests. I gathered that the "classic" periods of the four "medieval" civilizations—Monte Alban, Teotihuacán, Totonac, and Maya—fall roughly into the first eight centuries of the Christian era. The "pre-classic" ones go back much further, to at least 1400 B.C.

"We learned a lot," he continued with pride, "in our own backyard, right here in the brickyards of this city, Tlatilco. I directed its excavation. The name 'Tlatilco' means 'Where things are hidden.' Before we stepped in, the treasure hunters were having a field day there. So many treasures were being found every day that it didn't pay the brickmakers to make bricks!"

"And you found—?"

"—ceramics, beautiful sculpture, things that were made *thirty centuries ago.* Two thousand years before the Maya, who were once thought to be our oldest culture!"

He sighed and sank back on the pillows. "It has been the same everywhere. Look at what the discovery of Bonampak, just after the war, taught us about the Maya. No one could any longer pretend, after looking at those magnificent frescoes in the Chiapas jungle, that the Maya were a peace-loving people. The peace lovers, judging from their sculpture, were the peoples of the long-neglected Totonac area around Veracruz from whom the Maya borrowed so much—as they did from so many other earlier cultures—the Remojadas, for instance, with their dancing boys and grinning girls. To this day," he added, "you'll notice that the Gulf Coast people are great laughers compared with the distrustful Mexicans of the highlands.

"We'll talk about you, and your new writings about art," he said, "the next time you come here." I had a presentiment we

wouldn't, but I tried to smile and told him to take care of himself. The nurse was waiting patiently in the doorway with a tray of medicines. I noticed that her dress was dirty and that she wore no shoes.

* * *

Hearing that Siqueiros was back from his world tour and about to leave for Morelia to paint a mural, I stopped in at his house on the way home. He was about to leave but there was time to get acquainted.

The house seems out of character. A formal parlor with adjoining diningroom on the second floor is furnished with overstuffed chairs, an inlaid Japanese table with spindly legs, a bleeding Christ on a wooden column, and on the sideboard a dish of waxed fruit, two crystal decanters, and a pair of cut-glass goblets. Only a massive portrait of Señora Siqueiros, brazen in its gleaming frontality, bore the revolutionary's trade-mark.

The maid returned with Siqueiros, who greeted me cordially. The first thing that surprised me about him was his size. I had expected, from the photographs and self-portraits and what I knew of his explosive life, a giant of a man. He was considerably shorter than I, probably not more than five feet five. Only his face, with its aquiline beak, restless eyes, and craggy brows, is formidable. Yet Siqueiros gives the impression, because of his energy, of being not only taller than he is but much younger.

His charm was the second thing that impressed me. There is none of the formula-mouthing of Rivera; and if he feels any of the bitterness which all the leftists—including the equally charming O'Gorman—share, he doesn't show it. Even when speaking of his exclusion from the United States (he hasn't been able to get a visa since the war) he appears to be impatient only over the extent to which this has limited his experimenting. "I have to write hundreds of letters for synthetic materials, plastics, spray guns, and so forth. If I were where all these things come from, I could make enormous technical strides quickly.

"Do you know," he added, "that Mexico is the only country in the world that supports not one but *two* institutions devoted solely to experimentation in the techniques of art?"

I had seen Siqueiros' most radical experiment, a high-relief mural on the outside of a building in University City. Contemplating those figures, which look a little like inflated sausages, I had thought of the criticism attributed to Orozco—"The trouble with Siqueiros is that he never has room for the feet." Siqueiros deserves great credit, though, for tackling the problem of outdoor murals in a country where even the indoor ones are succumbing to the elements. The University mural, however harsh from close up, was designed to be seen, Siqueiros told me, "from a car traveling past at sixty miles per hour."

* * *

We've moved to one of a cluster of "picturesque" stone-and-brick dwellings in San Angel built by a young artist who paints boneless pink horses cavorting on the beaches of impossibly blue lakes. He lives abroad, leaving a sister in command of this real-estate empire built out of the columns and rubble of the past. This harassed and shifty-eyed brunette, firmly anchored to the one heated room in the establishment (her parlor), is addressed by Beebe and the other American children by the somewhat redundant title of "Mrs. Señora." A more incompetent custodian cannot be imagined. On top of her failure to provide us with heat, mattresses, refrigeration, or plumbing for the first ten days of our incumbency, she asked yesterday for a loan of 700 *pesos* —an advance on our December rent. This was too much. I said flatly, No. Not a cent until the end of the month, and nothing then unless the promised services are forthcoming. Her answer to this was that we must move out. Her "honor" had been questioned! "It is clear that you don't trust me." Seeing that honor was at stake, I hastened to explain that we trusted her but that we wouldn't have funds ourselves until the first of the month. This seemed to satisfy her. She couldn't have expelled us anyway, since a Mexican law states that every tenant must have three months' notice. This is a law, I'm told, which thousands of dishonest tenants take advantage of, moving every three months, rent unpaid, to new lodgings. We may have to invoke it ourselves. I anticipate trouble.

3 TO OAXACA AND BEYOND

The Road, Then and Now—Timeless Oaxaca—Tehuántepec and Díaz's Weapon—Approach to Chiapas—Engine Trouble—Anthropologists and Archeologists—Indian Rehabilitation at San Cristobal—Visit to Chamula—Mitla, Monte Alban, and the Zapotec Peace—Popular Art and Economics—Return to Mexico—Covarrubias and Villa Rojas

November 12, Oaxaca

Arrived at this capital of southern Mexico about 9:30 in the evening after a 10:00-o'clock start from Mexico. If we had driven without stopping we could have made it in seven hours. We drove too fast, as it was. The road is hilly and winding but quite new. In fact, when I visited Oaxaca in 1937 there had been no road at all, and the trip by narrow-gauge railway, via Puebla, had taken the better part of two days. My wife and I had been accompanied by two friends we met on the boat to Tampico, a young Philadelphia lawyer and an English manufacturer who was a nephew of Sidney and Beatrice Webb. During the remainder of our stay in Mexico they had used the term "narrow-gauge" to refer to anything that didn't work. There had been engine failures, landslides, broken ties, blocked tunnels, hour-long halts while the engineer chatted with a friend on a siding or stopped for a basket of fruit in a shady spot. Once, in the Puebla station, our particular car had become detached from the rest of the train while the fireman conducted a leisurely love affair in an adjoining train shed; and at the triumphant moment of our car's reunion, the conductor had almost been decapitated by leaning over to exhibit a fighting cock to a friend and inadvertently putting his head between the approaching couplings.

In an automobile one sees more of Mexico but less of the

Mexicans. One sees a lot of one's companions—in this instance, Hal Cohen and Marty Hamos, the bearded students from San Miguel, who are accompanying me while Maia and Beebe remain in the capital.

Skirting Cholula and Puebla on the first leg of our trip, we spent some time photographing the two great snow-capped mountains, Popocatépetl and Ixtaccíhuatl, from various angles. We noticed that the figure of the Sleeping Woman for whom the Indians named the latter grows less and less "pregnant" as one moves away. Since Cortés, as he advanced on Mexico in 1520, must have observed an opposite effect, we speculated on whether he had discussed this symbolism with Malinche, his subtle native interpreter, or whether it was a discreet joke among the footsoldiers. Cortés's convenient love affair with the Indian maiden had averted so many linguistic and political disasters that the soldiers must have hoped it would last forever.

Passing the beautiful honey-colored church with tiled domes and towers at Atlixco, I thought also of Juárez. That Zapotec Indian boy from Oaxaca became a lawyer the hard way and must have driven by here often; it didn't trouble his anticlerical thoughts, apparently. I pictured his able but power-mad lieutenant, Porfirio Díaz, also an Indian from Oaxaca, riding up to Izucar de Matamoros through the dry hills with their thirty-foot single-stalk cacti, like accusing fingers, and the clusters of blue *candelabra* used to store grain against the rats, under the hogback of smooth rocks like the bellies of cattle.

Oaxaca, happily, has not changed at all. In '37 we had watched Alfonso Caso and his assistants removing the last of the royal treasures from the newly discovered tombs on Monte Alban. Today the golden necklaces and earplugs are on display at the museum on the *zócalo*, and Dr. Caso, after moving up the political ladder to the Interior Ministry under Alemán, now heads the Instituto Indigenista, which he founded. The *zócalo*, with its jade-green arcades and giant laurel trees full of singing birds, is the same. Its dozens of tiny booths dispensing everything but pipe tobacco haven't changed. Nor its army of vendors hawking *serapes*, the male blanket woven only by men. Nor the nearby Indian Market, largest on the continent, with the world-famous gray-clay bells from Coyotepec and children's whistles

with the blow-hole under the donkey's tail. The stall nearest the market church still sells witches' charms and pre-Columbian *copal.*

The Hotel Monte Alban hasn't changed either. Some *plumados* in sandals and feathered headgear were listlessly going through their ceremonial-dance paces in the dining patio with its dirty skylight when we entered. The guests (there were very few) were giving it scant attention, though the sound effects were horrendous. We were looking for a cheap hotel and this was the most expensive in town, but we thought we'd give it a shot.

"How much is your cheapest room, Señor?"

"Fifty *pesos,* for three."

"Very reasonable, but unfortunately we are students and can't pay more than thirty. Another time . . ." And we started to walk out in the direction of a lowly competitor across the square.

"Wait . . . For you only, Señores, if you don't require windows on the square, we could make an exception."

We agreed to take it, at thirty *pesos* (eighty cents each) per night for this night and for three more on our way back.

And now, after showers, and writing this entry, we're off to see the night life—beginning with a restaurant that doesn't have a plume dance, if there is one.

November 13, Tuxtla Gutierrez

Our first stop out of Oaxaca—first of how many dozen!—was the two-thousand-year-old *tule* tree which I had also inspected in '37 on the way to Mitla. This is something that probably won't have changed much when tourists are inspecting *our* ruins. It is 165 feet high—and the same in circumference! We decided to visit Mitla's ruins on the way back, and it's a good thing we did. The road into Chiapas province is through mountains like Haiti's, sparsely forested at the summits, cornfields geometrically laid out along the slopes.

Beyond Mitla the perfectly flat valley of Oaxaca ends. Climbing out of its fields of alfalfa and castor beans, we followed a dry riverbed. Cactus everywhere and the rocks bronze green or sulphur yellow. Some of the tips of the organ cacti

exude a sticky white foam which heightens their unhealthy look. Both sides of El Camerón virtually uninhabited. At El Manguito, pines. Finally leaving the mountains, we descended into the plain of Tehuantepec, ringed with distant isolated peaks, and into the mud streets of the flowery town itself. If Covarrubias didn't romanticize it in his celebrated book, there has been a dismal change in twenty years. The architecture is nondescript and the look of everything poverty-stricken. A few of the women were beautiful in their ankle-length red or purple skirts, the hair in two long pigtails cased in satin ribbons. A taxi driver who spoke enough English to make his meaning clear offered us one for fifteen *pesos*.

At the Hotel Tehuantepec we talked to the American proprietor, who had been there fifty years. He tried to sell us a collection of "pre-Columbian" sculptures, made of perfectly unchipped black stone, for $250. Failing in that, he pointed out the late Doña Juana Romero's shoddy mansion by the railroad tracks. The house was locked up. We would have liked to see the crystal chandeliers under which this latter-day Malinche entertained in the days when she was fat and rich with influence. But our friend did show us a fused foot-long mortar shell of stone which he claimed to have seen Don Porfirio Díaz present to his mistress of earlier days "as a memento of our campaigns together" when the aged President opened the nearby port of Salina Cruz in 1906. The symbolism was almost too perfect.

We drove to the port along a new, perfectly flat macadam road and had a swim in the Pacific marred only a little by the terrific wind which blasted sand in our eyes as we emerged from the tepid waters. Salina Cruz was developed as a Pacific port by Díaz, who also built a rail line to it across the isthmus, with the idea of avoiding the shipment of east-west cargoes around Cape Horn. But when the Panama Canal was opened in 1914 Salina Cruz lost its *raison d'être* and became the windswept ghost town it is today.

Continuing to Juchitán, slightly larger and dirtier than Tehuantepec, we had our first flat tire, caused by a piece of razor-sharp bone that pierced one of the snow tires and delayed us an hour. Unlike Tehuantepec, which has the scenic advantages of a river confluence and a hillside site, Juchitán has noth-

ing but heat and dust. If, as they say, half the poets and artists in the capital were born here, one could understand why they left. It was at this town in the 1880s that land speculators first seized the Indian communal farm lands (*ejidos*) which had been inviolate since Aztec times. One of the Indians protested to the ex-Indian in the National Palace, and Díaz responded by moving in federal troops and massacring five hundred of the peons. It is said that this action would have touched off the revolution thirty years before it came were it not that Díaz (with the support of Washington) was able so successfully to warn of the imminence of another American invasion that things quieted down.

The road from here on defies the country it crosses. Many of the remoter valleys are still unexplored and are said to contain families, perhaps whole tribes, that have lived in isolation since pre-Conquest times. The villages that have been visited, containing Zoques in the mountains and Huaves along the lagoons, are classified by the Zapotec traders as *cerrados*, closed or lost. Some of their inhabitants live in perpetual drunkenness. One village, afflicted with a dread disease of the eye, has an almost totally blind population. Individuals with stone-age clothing and weapons, so Mongoloid in feature that archeologists speculate that they got sidetracked here on the great migration from Bering Strait to Peru, wander into a border town, survey such marvels as the plow and the wheel with stupefaction, and return whence they came without speaking a word. Discussing them, and the folly of our own frantic effort to leave a mark on time, we became suddenly speechless ourselves.

As if in answer to our gloomy thoughts, trouble now stalked us. The radiator began to overheat, requiring a gallon of water every ten miles. At the Chiapas border we were detained almost an hour at the sentry post because my tourist card contained my daughter's name and it was obvious that she wasn't in the car. When I explained that she was in Mexico with her mother, one of the officers said quite seriously, "Then it will be necessary for you to return and get her."

I thought of every prominent Mexican I knew or had ever known. One of the soldiers remembered Covarrubias from his Tehuantepec days, but it made no difference. Finally, in desperation, I said: "Gentlemen, I am here to write a book about

(among others) General Cárdenas. I am sure that General Cárdenas will be disappointed if I do not visit Chiapas. . . ."

Their reaction was instantaneous. Not only did they hope that our trip forward would be a pleasant one, but if we preferred to wait until morning in view of the delicate condition of our car, they would be most happy to find us accommodations nearby. We declined, thanked them, and chugged on, arriving here in Tuxtla, edgy and exhausted, at midnight. Even the final ascent past banks of what looked like chrysanthemums lining both sides of the road failed to stir us.

November 14, San Cristobal de Las Casas

The low point of our trip was reached this morning when we checked the oil before leaving Tuxtla and discovered that the crankcase was half full of *water*. At that point the battery shorted. Then our luck changed. The PEMEX man directed us to a Willys service station that had just been opened, the newest in the entire country. Four and a half hours later the worn-out gasket on the cylinder block had been replaced and we had started to climb the last fifty miles of our eight-hundred-mile trek. From then on everything was beautiful. The distant vistas of tropical Chiapas. The idyllic village by the hidden lake. The Indians in their gathered sheepskins, bare legs, and pink-tasseled flat-brimmed hats.

We were greeted in San Cristobal by Señor Villa Rojas, the assistant director of the Instituto Indigenista, to whom Dr. Caso had given me a letter. He not only offered us free rooms at the local *centro* but suggested taking us tomorrow on a field trip among the nearby tribes of Zinacantán and Chamula. Villa Rojas is a short, swarthy, quick-witted anthropologist, obviously in love with his work. While he was giving us a short lecture in front of his maps on the scores of dialects spoken by the 125,000 non-Spanish-speaking Indians of Chiapas, I asked him what attitude his organization takes toward the native religion. "We don't interfere with it," he said, and then added with a note of sadness in his voice, "With new technology, the old gods lose their function."

Frans Blom, a dilettante archeologist, collector, and preserver of the ancient cults and costumes, with whom we had tea, put

it somewhat differently. "I'm glad I'll be dead," he said, as he showed us a color film of the Chamulas stamping out a blazing ritual field with their bare feet, "when all the Indians are in overalls and all the tourists are in Indian costume."

Another guest at the Bloms' fabulous home, a six-foot, husky-voiced, hatchet-faced American woman anthropologist who has done field work in Mexico for eighteen years, looked at a shot of Indians hugging themselves or flapping their arms to keep warm in the chill 7,000-foot air, and made a characteristic remark of her own. "Isn't it as cold as charity?" she said.

I thought for a moment as I passed a large bookstore in Tuxtla this morning: Maybe the Mexicans are accomplishing what we never accomplished, bringing culture step by step along with civilization. For, here in the window were books few American villages ever hear of—Lorca, Tolstoi, Flaubert, Kafka, Sartre. But then I went into the restaurant next door for breakfast and thought: Not if we can help it! A juke box manufactured in Ohio was blasting a disc of Elvis Presley singing, "I'm nothin' but a houn' dog!" and signs on the wall implored the native to purchase "Mum," "Black Flag," and "Pepsi-Cola."

We turned in at San Cristobal on a different, though doubtless doomed, note. A Chamula "orchestra" was accompanying native songs in the patio. The instruments included a harp, a flute, a two-stringed violin, a guitar, and jar drums—instruments which the Chamulas are said to venerate as the Aztecs their *teponaxtli*, dedicating them at religious ceremonies with gifts of incense, sweetmeats, and cigarettes. They played them as if they venerated them, and when we offered to pay, declined most graciously and gave us an encore.

November 15

Our second night, we were guests of the wonder-working Instituto, an organization that appears to be working *with* and not *for* the Indian, having a genuine and not sentimental respect for his culture. The Indian is not uprooted. He isn't given what he doesn't want. He is not patronized for his primitive skills, yet he is made to feel that those skills are valuable and unique—as indeed they are. If he wants to "pass over" and become a twentieth-century Mexican, he is at liberty to do so. Of course, the

economic situation of the average Indian, who owns perhaps five-by-nine meters of eroded mountain land, is not conducive to rapid advancement. That much land is sufficient to feed him and his family *one week out of the fifty-two in the year.* For the rest he must journey to the low country and pick coffee or fruit for an absentee *hacienda* owner—often bringing malaria back with him to add to the bronchial disorders and typhus common in some of the mountains.

The Instituto's *centro* here (first of the four established to date, the others being in the back country of Oaxaca, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz) teaches him the advantages of cooperatives; offers him elementary Spanish and accounting, if he wants them; supplies free medical and surgical care; installs pure, fresh water; and gives him (for the first time in history) a sense that outsiders respect him for what he is and can do. In the Chamula area we visited this morning, typhus, from an incidence of seventy per cent, has been eliminated through inoculation. The Indian has even been taught that the tourist with his camera is a friendly trespasser, motivated mainly by curiosity.

Unfortunately the Instituto reaches only a tiny fraction of those Mexican Indians who need this kind of help and receives but token support from the federal government.

* * *

The internationally reported incident of the German-American artist who was clubbed to death by Indians near here last summer has been explained to us as follows. The artist set out on foot from San Cristobal, without knowing a word of Indian—or even Spanish. He traveled for six days and nights. On the seventh he arrived at a remote village, crazy with thirst. Unable to indicate his need, he grabbed for a water jug a woman was carrying. This move was interpreted as hostile and the cry rose that he was an evil spirit, else he would speak. They killed him and buried his body hastily.

But there had been an additional motive in the murder. It seems that the Indians in that area had been operating stills in defiance of a federal law; they feared detection. As it was, the crime might never have been solved had not our guide of this morning, a widely respected Indian constable who speaks Span-

ish, sent out word that unless the murderers were identified and handed over within a week, federal troops would move into the district. Naturally, the last thing in the world these Indians want is to submit their way of life—which, because of the inaccessibility of Chiapas, has been virtually independent of politics, revolutions, and tax collectors since the Conquest—to federal jurisdiction.

* * *

The chapel at Chamula was a revelation. The spacious nave was strewn with fragrant pine needles, and the transepts were sweet with incense. We saw no men among the worshipers. The Indian women wore *huipils* of black wool with red stitching, and black *rebozos*. (In the streets, especially during the damp nights, these *rebozos* are invariably held over the mouth and nose, giving a Mohammedan look to urban Chiapas.) They were praying in clusters before irregularly shaped flat stones that sparkled with votive candles and were rich with varicolored waves of hardened wax. Along one wall stood a dozen almost life-size wooden sculptures of real quality, possibly dating back to 1528, when Cortés's lieutenant, Diego de Mazariégos, founded San Cristobal in the valley which Bernal Díaz (and the Indians, to this day) called Jovel.

Other groups of life-size images of the saints, more modern but very beautiful in their flowing gowns of silk or *serapes*, with waxen faces and real hair, stood in ranks across the transept. Some of them had a small image of a *tigre* (jaguar) peeping out from under the skirt. This, we were told, was the original Indian god, being worshiped under protective cover of the "Saint of the Witch Doctors." Frans Blom told us later, in fact, that among the Lacandón tribe to the east, priests beat a drum during the full moon "to keep the Jaguar off it," and that even in San Cristobal, during a recent eclipse, beating of tin cans and kettles had commenced spontaneously and swept over the city, lest the enraged jungle deity refuse to disgorge his celestial prey.

Frances Toor in one of her books tells of a procession for rain that took place in Oaxaca province some years ago. The Indians were carrying the effigy of a robed Catholic saint. When the rain didn't come, they got angry, tore the clothes off the

saint, dropped his body by the wayside, and continued the procession with a stone idol in the place of honor.

Even the immense crosses of wood on the hills about Chamula are not, we were told, Christian symbols at all but the original Maya symbol of the conjunction of space and time, invoked to this day for black magic as well as white—and safely so, because of the incidental Christian significance.

If I mentioned Frans Blom slightingly in my last entry, I shouldn't have. On second meeting, this afternoon, he impressed me with his erudition, his sincerity, his modesty. Villa Rojas tells us that Blom had a good deal to do with the excavation of Uxmal. He also rediscovered the great Maya ruins at Yaxchilán on the Usumacinta River that separates Chiapas from Guatemala, and he has made accurate (in many cases, the *only*) maps of large unexplored areas of Chiapas. His home and his collection are both superb. The palatial mansion, with its slightly irregular patio formed of ranks of arches protecting a vaulted walk, was bought for a few hundred dollars fairly recently; and the collection consists entirely of items that Blom actually found himself on his various explorations of the jungle or that were brought to him by grateful Indian friends.

November 16, Oaxaca

We drove down from San Cristobal de Las Casas in a day, with no more trouble than a flat outside Mitla which Hal and I changed in nineteen minutes. By that time Marty had succumbed to a hypochondria which has been creeping over him ever since we left Oaxaca. First it was his stomach, then his head, then his throat, then cramps again, and finally, this afternoon (in quick succession), a cut from a can opener, a return of cramps, and hot flashes which he instantly diagnosed as malaria.

We had stopped briefly to look at the new Palace of Culture in Tuxtla. I had the unusual experience of seeing in glass cases inferior examples of the native folk arts (Chamula *huipils*, Lacandón figurines and *copal* bowls, etc.) that I had just bought in San Cristobal. In the setting sun the drive down to Juchitán, past pointed mountains whose pastures cover them like loosely draped blankets, was very beautiful. We arrived here at 9:00.

November 18

Spent yesterday acquiring more pieces for the Mexican room of my planned community museum at Oakland: a Zapotec sun god, a Mixtec carving on sandstone that I am not at all sure about, a superb Chinantecán *huipil* of red and blue brocaded wool, a small bronze crucifix of the Colonial period. In a new shop, just opened by Clotilde Schonduby, an old Oaxaca hand, and Arthur Train, III, a young American photographer, I was struck by some painted candelabra from which small ceramic figures dangle. Unlike the familiar glazed type that come from Matamoros, these are *mat*, and the painting, in reds, blues, and blacks, is applied with delicate concentration. It seems that they are the work of a master craftsman named Herón Martinez who lives in Acatlán. We plan to pay him a visit on the way back.

Craftsmen of an earlier epoch decorated the lovely church at Tlacachauya which we visited this morning. I photographed a two-dimensional life-size saint whose skirt was painted entirely with human *eyes*. The artist, no surrealist, was providing protection for victims of glaucoma.

We drove on to Mitla. The appliquéd geometrical abstractions in stone which cover the walls of the principal temple there are extremely elegant, but cold—something that may also be said of Cubism and those later manifestations of modern art which derive from Cubism. Although this temple was a late-Zapotec shrine at the time of the Conquest, it was built several centuries earlier by the Mixtecs, who had taken over worship of the Toltec "culture hero," Quetzalcoatl, the Feathered Serpent. Covarrubias thinks that the geometric stone patterns might have been a formalized representation of the bird's feathers or the serpent's scales. Here, at least, it was a gloomy cult. Mitla was and is a tomb. The Mixtec god Xipetotec was a forerunner of the bloodthirsty Aztec idols. Penitents were sealed up alive in these walls and one legend has it that Fray Francisco de Burgoa in the 1650s sent priests into one of the subterranean passageways until they encountered snakes and evil smells and a fierce wind, which caused them to "wall up forever this back door to hell." It was this same good Dominican who secretly watched a pagan

Zapotec confession rite and was horrified to hear the confessor conclude: "Now you can be happy and sin anew."

In the private museum of Howard Leigh, near the ruins, there is a most extraordinary Zapotec head of a young man, dating, Leigh told us, from the classical period of this culture around the second century A.D. It was found near Ejutla about ten years ago. Its anguished beauty bespeaks a culture with humane preoccupations very far from those of the later Mixtecs, Toltecs, and Aztecs.

The center of that civilization for several thousand years was Monte Alban, a mountaintop four miles west of Oaxaca, which I visited this afternoon with an attractive California girl, Ann Merrill—Hal having now developed a fever of his own which kept him, reluctantly, at the hotel with the ailing Marty.

Among the major archeological sites of Mexico (Teotihuacán near the capital, La Venta in Veracruz province, Palenque in Chiapas, Chichen-Itzá and Uxmal in Yucatán are others) Monte Alban is special for several reasons. It is the oldest, dating back to at least the fifth century B.C., and the only one continuously occupied until the Conquest. In consequence its study has been the most rewarding and its finds (probably because its comparatively recent excavation, under Caso in 1932-1944, was conducted scientifically) the richest.

The site covers twenty-five square miles, was once surrounded by a lake, and at times was inhabited by a ceremonial population estimated to have numbered 100,000. The central plaza is 1,000 feet long and 650 feet wide. Monte Alban's hieroglyphic writings, its calendar, its numerals, and its observatory shaped like an arrowhead to face the winter solstice antedate the Mayas, to whom these intellectual inventions are usually ascribed; and the art of these ancestors of the Zapotecs, if less flamboyant and subtle than that of the Mayas, gives indication of a healthier, less caste-ridden culture. For one thing, the Zapotecs appear not to have become obsessed, as the Mayas were, with measuring time; time and space are identical in their thinking, and the stars were worshiped as symbols of permanence amid the flux of worldly ambitions. The proof of the success of their philosophy is in the centuries of peace and uninterrupted commerce with the

lands to the south and north—a unique achievement in the annals of Middle America. No weapons were found in the Monte Alban tombs. The famous Tomb 7, which Caso discovered in 1932 with its nine pounds of jewels, is of very late date, probably just before the Conquest, and its craftsmen were the ultra-refined but less humane Mixtecs.

The serenity of the Zapotec culture is best expressed in the proportions of the great plaza, its nobly stepped temples, and its gentle domination of the great valley. We were reluctant to leave it and found little to say until released from its magical communion with the heavens.

November 19

Ready to take off for the capital at dawn tomorrow after another very full day. Spent the morning with Arthur Train and a young Mexican, Carillo-Valdez, visiting the sacristy of the Santo Domingo monastery north of the *zócalo* where young Porfirio Díaz made his way by night to Don Marquez Perez's cell, a daring exploit which led to the subsequent capture of the city by the Juaristas. An old lieutenant colonel of engineers, Guillermo Reimers Fenochio, explained the feat to us. As late as 1910, when Díaz was in his seventies, Fenochio had seen the old dictator climb an eight-meter rope hand-over-hand at the military school in the capital.

In the Santo Domingo cloister (turned back to the Dominicans by Cárdenas) we inspected the bullet-pocked walls where mounted Juaristas had galloped in to put an end to the clerical Inquisition. Juárez's house (he was not born here, but in a village near Oaxaca) is two blocks away, across from the Carmelite Convent. It is without interest.

At 6:00 I had dinner with Lini de Vries. Harvey O'Connor and his wife were the other guests. Miss de Vries is a hard-driving American public-health worker, blacklisted in the United States, so she says, for having been a nurse in Loyalist Spain in 1937; she is about to become a Mexican citizen "because America won't give me the right to work in my own field."

Her work in the state of Oaxaca is with the TVA-like Comisión Papaloapan, a larger version of the irrigation, reclamation, and Indian regeneration agency which Cárdenas set up in

Michoacán some years ago. (Papaloapan in the aboriginal language meant "River of Butterflies.") The agency was established in 1945 under President Alemán who, whatever may be said about his grafting proclivities, appears to have done more to modernize and industrialize Mexico than any of his predecessors or followers. But Miss de Vries gives most of the credit for it to Cárdenas.

The watershed of the Papaloapan River drains fifty per cent of the huge state of Oaxaca, thirty per cent of Veracruz, and twenty per cent of Puebla. The agency has built a big dam on the Oaxaca-Veracruz border, where a lake larger than Chapala is being created. Though financed by federal money, its subsidiary activities—Indian schools, traveling teachers, basketball and other recreations—are fifty per cent locally financed.

Miss de Vries appreciates the work of the Instituto Indigenista but says: "We feel their approach is romantic—this dealing with the Indians through their local dialects. We know the Indians want to learn Spanish, and with the big need of Mexico for dams and heavy industry, there just isn't time to keep them artificially retarded in their ancient culture. Since Cárdenas' administration, twenty years of rural education in Mexico has made even the Zapotecs—the tribe that (like the Tarascans and the Yaquis) was never really conquered by Spain, and that has produced more poets and revolutionaries than any other—understand the need for rapid progress." The Zapotecs of today, she pointed out, are unique in another respect. They have never wanted anything to do with bullfighting. The strain of cruelty, inherited in Mexico from Spaniards and Aztecs, is foreign to Zapotec tradition. Before the Conquest, their blood sacrifices went no further than puncturing the lobe of the ear.

Mexico's budget, she concluded, is devoted principally to health, schools, and roads; defense is a poor fourth. When Papaloapan started, the first survey was made by *anthropologists.* The project's teachers—they receive from 200 to 400 *pesos* monthly, when the money to pay them is available at all—"are for the most part dedicated humanists." They feel at home in the Indian villages, "where absolute democracy exists, *el presidente municipal* being elected by popular vote for a two-year term without pay." Democratic influence only reaches the towns

indirectly, as in 1952, when a general strike caused the resignation of a corrupt governor of Oaxaca and his replacement by a comparatively honest one.

November 22, Mexico City

Three conversations today threw light on the Oaxaca trip and will serve to conclude it.

The first was with Covarrubias, whose appearance hasn't changed. He seems to be suffering much more than the first time I visited him. He didn't want to talk about Oaxaca. He was bored by the idea of the Zapotec peace. He suggested darkly that politics was behind the present tendency to deflate Prescott and consider the Aztecs totalitarian. He asserted that a Soviet scientist had found the key to the Maya glyphs but that the West won't listen to him. Among the proposed figures in my projected study of Mexican history, he expressed real enthusiasm only for Cuauhtémoc, the Aztec chief who led the final, unsuccessful resistance to Cortés and who has become a recent idol of the leftists; and for "the three great Mexicans, Juárez, Zapata, and Cárdenas." But it was when the recent insurrection in Hungary came into the conversation that I was really astonished by Miguel's views. He went so far as to say that the whole uprising of the past three weeks had been nothing more than a U.S.-financed propaganda campaign; that the photos of Budapest in *Life* "clearly show the Hungarians to be the aggressors"; and that "for all we can tell, the tanks were Hungarian rather than Russian"!

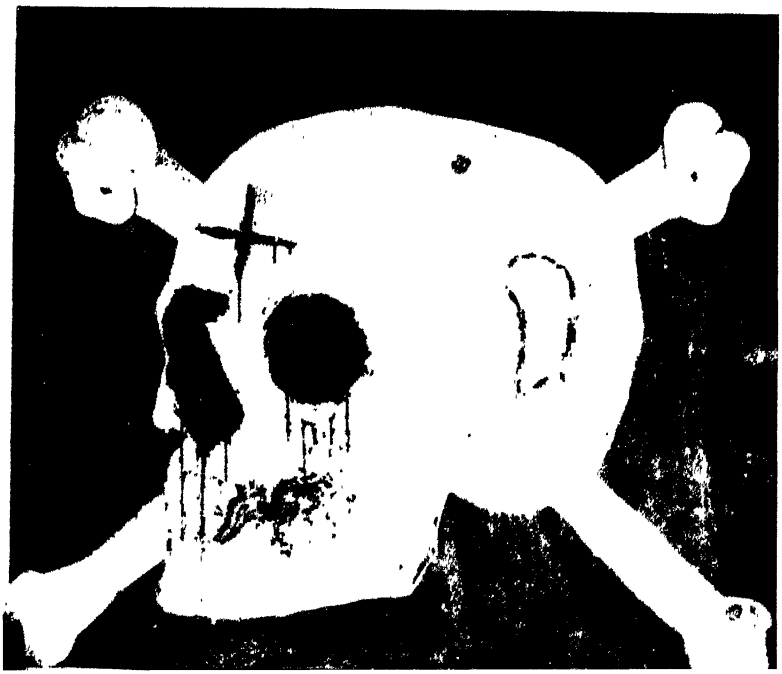
Shifting to the Mexican scene, he charged that President Ruiz Cortines was "hopelessly the tool of the American Embassy" and that if he took an independent line the *peso* would be devalued by a concerted action of the American banks "just as it was a few years ago at Dulles's direction after Mexico's independent vote at the Caracas Conference—in punishment, mind you!—reducing the value of our currency from eight *pesos* to the dollar to the present twelve." He also criticized President Alemán bitterly for having built the multimillion-dollar University City as a personal monument to himself without allowing a cent for equipment or upkeep. On *that* score Covarrubias may have a point!

(*left*) "Two in sombreros eye me with suspicion. They are doing nothing—why am I so busy? . . also (*right*) the father of a family, whose wife and children are breakfasting on a packing crate

. and a girl with a transfigured expression and a halo of sunlight in her hair."

(*left*) The Alhóndiga de Granaditos at Guanajuato. (*right*) The cathedral of the *grito* at Dolores

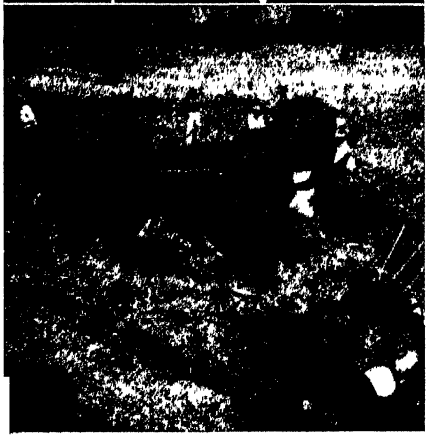
"A white skull on a black wall, and a dirty word – the final gesture of defiance"



Hidalgo Fresco by Orozco in Chamber of Deputies, Guadalajara

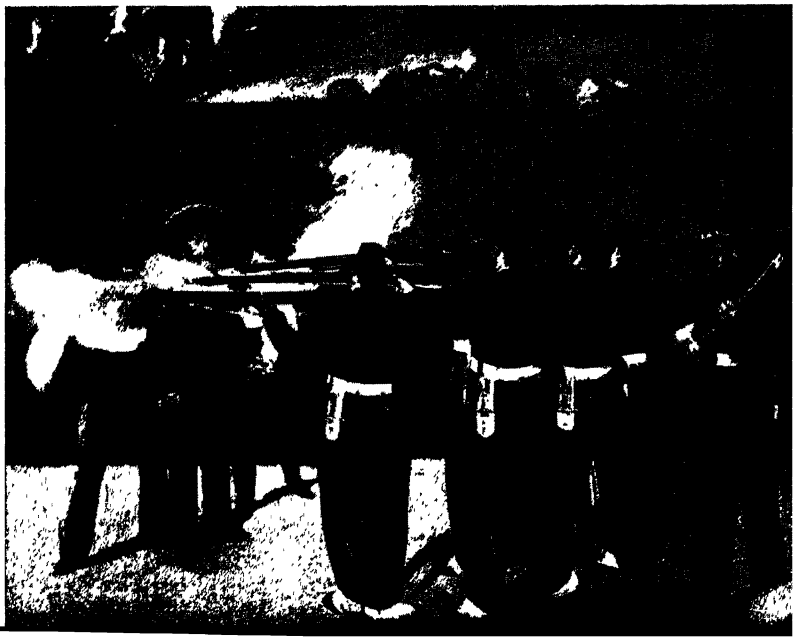
(*above*) "*Toro!* " (*above left*) "The power and the glory "

"If I must be killed tomorrow
Then let them kill me today ."



Muy macho . .

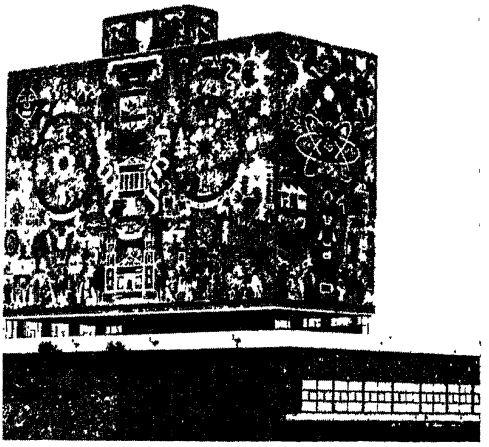
QUERÉTARO
(*above*) We hadn't come to see this bull skinned, but (*below*) Manet's great picture takes care of the rest (Photo Kunsthalle, Mannheim, Germany)



Fresco by Diego Rivera in Ministry of Education

Diego in his studio.

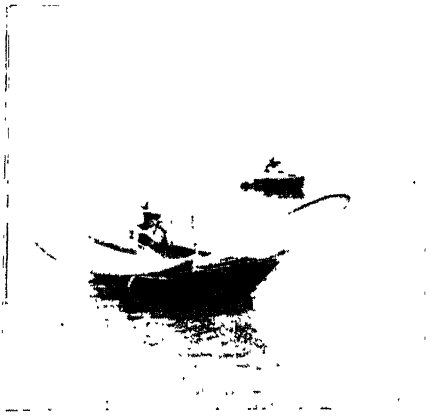
Juan O'Gorman

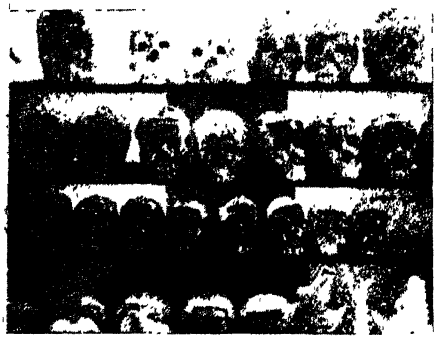


O'Gorman's University Library

Detail from Orozco fresco, National Preparatory School

Orozco's "Mother's Farewell," National Preparatory School



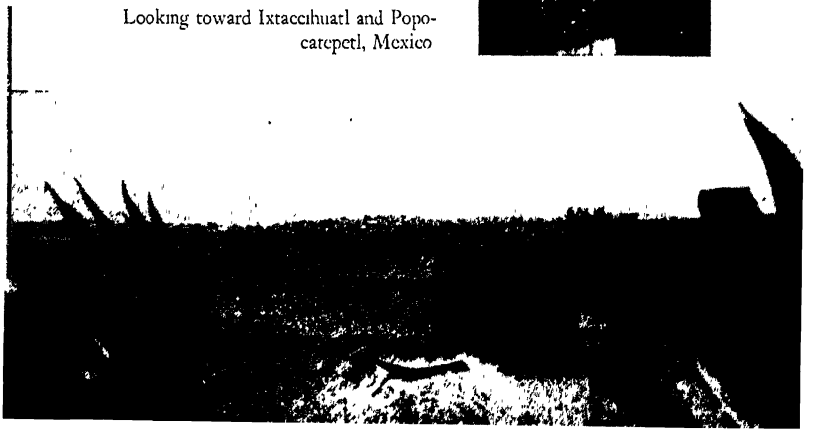


Butterfly nets, Lake Patzcuaro

Candy skulls, Toluca.

Collection boy, anywhere

Looking toward Ixtaccihuatl and Popocatepetl, Mexico



I had lunch with Dick Oulihan, chief of the *Time* bureau here, and asked him to explain the devaluation of the currency. The *peso* had been devalued, he said, for one reason only: to bring more tourists to Mexico. The move was so successful from this point of view, he added, that Mexico is now getting $300,000,000 a year out of American visitors alone, more than any other Latin-American country by far. Oulihan told me also that the Instituto Indigenista gets less federal money for its four *centros* than the government spends maintaining the capital's fountains.

Villa Rojas came to dinner. In contrast to Lini de Vries, he gives Alemán all the credit for Papaloapán, Cárdenas none. He suggested that if I see the latter I ask him about the fate of his pet project, the *ejidos* in Yucatán. The sisal growers there, he claims, are now benefiting as a result of the turning back of the *fincas* (plantations) to private ownership under government supervision.

The main objective of the Instituto Indigenista, Villa Rojas says, is to improve the standard of living of the Indians by such *gradual* industrialization as the turpentine-extraction and processing plant now being installed in Chiapas, which will provide them with an income of 17,000,000 *pesos* annually. He denied that native-language classes are favored, except in the transition period, or that there was any conflict with Papaloapan over this point. He himself had established the latter's cultural apparatus, he added. "The native languages, like the native crafts, are bound to wither away, along with the native superstitions. The final aim is to be in harmony with one's environment, and control it."

He told an amusing story in connection with an effort he had made recently to get the Indians to put a brake on their assessing themselves ten *pesos* each for the rebuilding of the Catholic chapels. He convinced them that the $10,000 they had collected so far should help to support also their schools and hospitals, but he could not talk them into putting the money in a bank. They preferred to entrust it to a certain "wise man" among them. This man turned out to be very old and dressed in rags. "He will know where to hide it and how to dispense it,"

Siqueiros is a political revolutionary. Tamayo is (or was) a revolutionary in the field of interpreting man's anxieties in visual terms. But both are revolutionaries in a technical sense—trying always to find new ways of projecting their visions in such a way as to reawaken within us an awareness of our experience.

From that point on they part company. Siqueiros, whose simpler task is to make the "worker" conscious of his "class" and of his "revolutionary mission," uses the most rudimentary symbols. He takes them from industry and political cartooning. The Electrical Workers' mural was Siqueiros's first since his unfinished 1924 "Burial of a Worker" in the National Preparatory School, with its three Indian-featured miners thrusting their symbol of unity-in-death (a coffin) at the spectator. In the 1939 mural Siqueiros presents Hitler and the Democratic Big Three as his demons. The children of Republican Spain are innocent angels being screwed into a press "powered" by a dive bomber. Republican justice is a Greek temple with Liberté-Egalité-Fraternité on its pediment. It is going up in flames which issue from a moneybag. The over-all effect, with its high-lighted black machine forms against flame, is exciting and maddening. Like an early Eisenstein film. There are other points of comparison: the crude humor (one of Hitler's three hands holds a pansy) and the use of photo montage to keep hammering the message at the spectator's ("guilty") conscience.

Tamayo's subject is also man. But man, as he himself has stated, in "everyday life." The pictures are just as dramatic and full of the tensions of our time. In the catalogue to an exhibition at the Bellas Artes, Tamayo even implies an analogy to Siqueiros; he was trying, he says, "to project the forms toward the exterior in order to make use of the space that exists between the painting and the viewer." But, whereas Siqueiros's protagonists are suffering from the conspiracies of malign class forces working upon their exposed bodies, Tamayo's Man (he is always alone, accompanied at most by his shadow) is suffering inside from his inability to reconcile his instinctual, primitive self with a universe no longer answerable to magic or religion. It is worth noting that Tamayo is a Zapotec Indian from Oaxaca, an internationally famous figure who has worked his way to the top not only in artistic but in social and financial terms, and who is

reputed to occupy his exalted position with considerable uneasiness.

Tamayo, in this sense of a self-made man defying the tradition-secure universe, is a romantic. He uses color for its emotional effect—or for its own sake. Why, for instance, are the bones in the various pictures he has painted of dogs howling, *blue?* "As one deliberately limits colors," he says—imagine Siqueiros or Rivera saying that!—"so the possibility of richness grows."

The murals in the Bellas Artes are suggestive tone poems in the manner of Schumann or Richard Strauss: vaguely emotional, full of the most exquisitely balanced poetry. Twenty years earlier, in the mural entitled "Music" in the National Museum, Tamayo had not yet freed himself from the dominant Mexican tradition of relating history by means of representational images, though even there, as Robert Goldwater pointed out in a monograph I helped to publish, "Tamayo has interpreted his theme, the Conquest of Mexico, as a magical event in Indian legend; it is not so much brute force that intervenes in the Conquest as some superior power that brings everything into being without any properly physical effort coming into play. The Spaniards are not represented as conquerors but as strange centaurlike creatures, which the terrified Indians thought they were seeing when the Spaniards landed on the Mexican coast."

In the Bellas Artes murals, "Mexico Today" and "The Birth of Nationality," man does not appear at all except as a spectral rider and the shadow of an Indian behind one of Cortés's armored towers. Is it any wonder that Tamayo's art is anathema to the dominant Mexican school of social realists? Or, conversely, that he is said to feel bitter about his "rejection" by the country of his birth?

November 28, Taxco

I met William Spratling, the famed silversmith and Mexicanist of Taxco, at Covarrubias' yesterday. He took me in his taxi to the office of Alfonso Caso, with whom I had an appointment. Caso, after his archeological work at Monte Alban, rose rapidly on the political ladder. After a period as Rector of the University, he became Interior Minister under Alemán and in the follow-

ing year (1949) founded the Instituto Indigenista. He received the Wener-Gren medal and other honors and had a book, *Homenajes*, published in his praise. He has become largely a money raiser—an indispensable function—because he can talk to presidents. The Instituto's budget is $800,000. The need, he told me, is for forty *centros*, or ten times $800,000. New ones will open next year in Guerrero, and in Nayarít, whose Indian population is still mostly non-Christian. Caso also told me that though racial discrimination is unknown in Mexico, cultural-economic discrimination against the Indian is still very widespread.

I rejoined Spratling for lunch at Sanborn's and we spoke of Covarrubias. We agreed that he will probably die in a few days if he can't be talked into going to a decent hospital. But Miguel insists that if he must go again to the hospital he will return to the state ward where he was so badly cut up and prematurely released. This is part of his Marxist complex. Better to die "collectively" than be saved in a "capitalist" private institution. It is a tragedy, because Covarrubias, who was never a first-rate artist, has become in the last two decades probably the greatest authority in the world on pre-Columbian sculpture. In addition he is a very sweet person, loved by his many friends.

Spratling suggested that I fly with him to his ranch in Guerrero, between the towns of Taxco and Iguala, the following morning. I was to meet him at the airport at 11:00. When he hadn't arrived by 1:00, I went to his plane, a two-seater aircoupe that weighs less than a motorcycle, and waited two hours more. While I waited, a mechanic in the hangar told me a fantastic yarn. Mexican aviation, he said, led the world in the early twenties, commercially and militarily.

"What happened?" I asked.

"The United States made us sign a treaty not to build any internal combustion engines for ninety-nine years. It was to protect your industry."

The one part-truth, I later learned, is that Mexico did drop the first bomb from the air on a ship—at Guaymas during the 1910-1912 revolution. Whether it fell on target, my informant couldn't tell me.

Spratling finally arrived at 3:00 and we took off, loaded with

sheets of silver, under an oncoming thunderstorm. We flew by way of Tepoztlán, east of Cuernavaca and directly over Lake Tequesquitengo, in order to avoid the high mountains. As it was, we had to climb to 10,000 feet, but not rapidly. Spratling at one point gestured to the wing on my side, which was shaking badly.

"What's wrong with it?" I shouted.

"Nine years old," he shouted back. "It's gonna drop off one of these days!"

The "airport" at Taxco is a cow pasture with a faintly discernible dust path down its center, but we landed without mishap.

Driving to Spratling's house, we inspected the workshops, where thirty or more smiths were busy with lathes, forges, and presses; then his pre-Columbian collection (in which field, I gathered, he is an expert second only to Covarrubias). He had just completed a new wing to display his Remojadas pieces. This culture of the Veracruz region flourished, he told me, between 200 and 600 A.D. Many of the pottery figurines have an infectiously humorous air. One smiling face I liked especially had a small hand cupped over the sardonically half-open mouth as if to say, "Don't believe a word you hear; they're all fakers!"

At that point a curious assortment of guests came in. First, a Colonel Wright, retired military attaché of Great Britain who is presently (a) writing a paper on the Mexican hairless dog (called *xolos*), which he traces to the Aztecs; (b) collecting rare orchids; (c) analyzing a local Indian cure for hemorrhoids; and (d) collecting a certain beetle which Mayan women since time immemorial have worn round their necks on a string as a love charm in memory of a princess who, denied marriage with her plebeian lover, turned him into this creature and wore him around *her* neck till the day she died.

There followed an American television newscaster named Collingwood and his wife, both enthusiasts for Haiti who had read my books on that country, and a celebrated photographer named Manuel Alvarez Bravo, who was about to photograph Spratling's sculpture. Finally came a retired American colonel named George Fearing, who had been in the State Department.

To keep himself "young," he told me, he had last month driven his Cadillac from San Antonio, Texas, to Cuernavaca in twenty-three hours without stopping except for gas.

The conversation, as if in search of eccentricity more classical, turned to Dr. Atl, the provocateur of Mexican mural painting and eminent vulcanologist, whose short stories Spratling has translated and Colonel Wright hopes to publish. The title story, "God Almighty in Mexico," tells how the Doctor, who ordinarily is regarded by dogs as their best friend, was climbing Popocatépetl one day when he noticed all the dogs along the way snapping at him viciously. Finally reaching the summit and observing from the crater a landscape worthy of his brush, he heard below him the Lord's Prayer being recited in a heartfelt voice. Glancing down, he saw an Indian boy on his knees looking up at him as he prayed. A dog approached the boy, looked up at the white-bearded Atl, and began to bark. The boy turned to the dog and said, "Don't you realize you mustn't bark at God Almighty?"

Diego Rivera has written a preface to these stories, and it is a delightful piece of writing. He says half-seriously that Atl's white beard, a romantic appendage, is the only thing that keeps him from being a great general and statesman, a greater banker than Morgan, a greater newspaper czar than Hearst, a realistic painter of the quality of Hiroshige, a botanist second to none, the world's greatest chef, and Don Juan incarnate. As it is, the beard makes him only the most *simpatico* of men—"an intelligent artist, delightful world traveler, and a very *efficient* man in spite of his being the most picturesque character of his time or in his country. His true genius is for literature, as these stories testify."

Spratling told two stories of Atl (whose original name, before he launched the Indianist revival and went to the Aztecs for this one, was Gerardo Murillo). Both stories date back to the period following the Revolution. It seems that President Carranza, after printing bales of inflated currency, gave Atl a bale or two with the injunction: "Distribute it to the people who need it around Popocatépetl."

Later, President Obregón, receiving $50,000 for flood relief from the Red Cross, told Atl to distribute it "to the most

deserving." Atl promptly took the money and left for a grand tour of Europe. Charged with this on his return, he answered: "And why not? *I* was the most deserving."

I had expected to spend the night at Spratling's. For some reason he announced that he was more than usually cantankerous and that I'd be more comfortable in Taxco. I drove into town with Colonel Fearing while his wife held a piece of Kleenex over the automatic light dimmer so that it wouldn't cut down at every whitewashed wall.

Climbing the narrow, cobblestoned, almost lightless streets past Wilhelm von Humboldt's mansion, I encountered a "guide" who found me a cheap hotel and a good restaurant where we had *enchilladas* and *tequila* and thanked God for American tourism, silver, and William Spratling, that quaint combination that has kept this beautiful hill town, outwardly at least, precisely as it was in Humboldt's time.

November 29, Mexico

Drove back to the capital with Milton and Tibby Leof, an American dental surgeon and his wife who have a handsome home and art collection in Taxco, and Daniel Brennan, an abstract-expressionist painter who lives with them. Before leaving we had breakfast with Spratling, who added his quota to the Cárdenas legend that I can already see accumulating in these pages. He had seen the General once, a little after his presidency, supervising the building of a harbor for Guerrero on the Pacific. The big labor boss, Fidel Velasquez of CTM, drove up in a Cadillac and, to impress the great man, started talking tough, his fedora pushed back and a cigar clamped in his mouth. Cárdenas listened stony-eyed for a while and then suggested that one did not talk with one's hat on or a cigar in one's mouth. Then he added coldly: "My name is Lázaro Cárdenas. I am a civilian. I am not in politics. Goodbye, gentlemen." And, turning his back to the newcomers, he went on with whatever he had been doing.

Spratling added that when Cárdenas, the former butcher's boy who had never had time for an education, became president, he at once ordered from Porrua a complete library of Marxist literature—and read it. But although Cárdenas received the Stalin

Peace Prize in 1954, he was independent enough to warn of the dangers of totalitarianism in his acceptance speech. I asked Spratling whether Cárdenas was reputed to be honest. He answered obliquely by describing some of the big deals engineered by the former President's brother Dámaso.

As I was leaving Taxco with the Leofs—passing brown, November-crop cornfields dotted with patches of blue morning-glories and trees filled with blooming magenta bougainvillea—they told me a story of the rejuvenation of the town. It seems that the man who got the Coca-Cola bottling concession insisted that the whorehouse next door move lest it interfere "with the dignity of my new profession."

Tourism, though a godsend to places like Taxco, is not enriching Mexico as it should. For one thing, an amount half as much as the total revenue from tourism is being spent by the new Mexican middle class *outside Mexico*—on American educations, cars, kitchen appliances, etc. Nevertheless, Mexico is becoming less dependent on agricultural imports. Though millions of eggs still have to be imported, the development of one-crop farm areas in the north, which produce wheat, rice, and cotton, is beginning to make Mexico self-sufficient in these staples.

December 5

Another more obvious evidence of Mexico's material progress is the city planning, which is transforming the capital under the administration of Mayor Ernesto Uruchurtu. Uruchurtu's enemies say that the beds of gladiolas he has planted down Insurgentes and other big boulevards represent the unsuccessful effort to locate the graves of his parents. But Uruchurtu, like all true creators, is less interested in his ancestors than in his descendants. The revolutionary shell-concrete markets he has sponsored are said to have already virtually eliminated amoebic dysentery. Oulihan, at dinner with us last night, told us where we might locate their designer, Felix Candela.

I called on Candela this morning. He insists he is not an architect. "An engineer?" I asked, looking at photo murals in his office of a shell-concrete church and the superbly designed Cosmic Radiation Laboratory at University City.

"No. A builder, I guess." He doesn't think a Mexican style

has evolved yet. "First the people must want it. What we are building they accept (sometimes reluctantly) but don't want."

Candela is still a young man, though he served in the army of Republican Spain and came to Mexico as a refugee in 1939 under Cárdenas' open-door policy. I was interested in his feeling of isolation as a Spaniard—though of course he's been a Mexican citizen these eighteen years. He's a little bitter about it. He quoted a Spanish proverb: "The wedge that splits the tree most effectively is made of the tree's own wood." He added that Mexicans never will accept Spaniards. "They'd accept an American first! But all of them are proud of a Spanish grandfather. . . ."

This came up while we were having lunch and discussing Diego Rivera's forthcoming seventieth-birthday celebrations, which are to be climaxed by a dedication ceremony at the controversial Aztec "tomb." Rivera himself, Candela dismissed summarily: he was the most cynical opportunist in Mexico, always getting the fattest mural commissions from the governments he affected to despise; he was "a facile imitator, without talent." And as for this neo-Aztec revival, this Cuauhtémoc cult, Candela went on, "it's laughable! The first real Mexican, not Spaniard, mind you, but *Mexican*, was Cortés. What he accomplished with 500 men, Cuauhtémoc couldn't accomplish with 500,000. But this Cuauhtémoc nonsense doesn't interest the Indian at all. It's nothing but a hothouse fabrication of the intellectual leftists. And the attempt to make 'Mexican' architecture out of Aztec and other pre-Columbian elements is just as ridiculous."

Candela preferred, from the past, the architecture of the Franciscan and Dominican monasteries, and from the present, Augusto Alvarez' bank (in front of the Lottery Building) and Eastern Airlines. At the University he admired with reservations O'Gorman's Library and the Stadium ("without Rivera's ponderous reliefs"). Then he returned to the Spanish theme.

"In Spain," he said, "we regard *all* Latin Americans as Spanish—Spain itself being made up of races just as different. But I would never have had the opportunities to build in Spain that I have had here."

After lunch we went in his car to see his various construc-

tions. First, the Church of the Miraculous Virgin, whose apse and vaulting were impressive but whose exterior decoration and stained glass I thought very ordinary. Enrique de la Mora's Church of San José del Altillo in Coyoacán seems to use the thin shell-concrete construction more daringly, but still not daringly enough. It's when Candela builds filling stations and supermarkets that he really goes to town. I asked him why this method of building was not being used in the United States, and in answer he drew some photographs from his briefcase. The wooden mold into which the concrete is poured requires for its erection carpenters *by the hundreds.*

We wound up our tour at the University, where Candela teaches a class. The scale models the students were making, built of matchsticks and glass thread, revealed the amazing possibilities of Candela's approach. In the sunlight they reminded me of the constructivist fantasies of Gabo and Pevsner.

Candela is building a house for himself in San Angel that is made of neither spun glass nor shell concrete. In fact, it is not modern at all. The style is Colonial, with small windows. Candela saw my look of astonishment.

"Why," he said, "are architects making all these glass houses in Mexico? Can you tell me? The windows must be instantly covered up to keep out the heat of the sun. So why do I make a house so thick, and so enclosed with high walls? And why do the tops of the walls, like most walls in Mexico, have broken bottles embedded in the cement? I'll tell you. A house in Mexico must be a fortress. And then it must be stocked with arms. Here is a true story. A friend of mine had his car stolen recently. A few days later the police called him to say: 'The man who took it wants 500 *pesos* for its return. Do you have the money?' " Candela was not bitter about this state of affairs. He laughed. "After all," he said, "how can a president get tough with the police on whom he depends for his very life? The situation is regrettable but it is constantly improving."

On the way back into town Candela revealed his own esthetic. "Belief in a theme is nothing. Being an artist is all. The Marxists confuse message with art. As if a thousand years of Madonnas doesn't amply prove that there could be badly painted

ones presented with as much religious conviction as the good! My intention in the church we saw was neither esthetic nor religious, and I'd be dishonest if I pretended so after the event. Consciously, I was only making a construction. Perhaps subconsciously I had deeper aims. Who knows?"

December 6

On the way to our house in San Angel this afternoon, I dropped in on Diego Rivera. He was preparing to leave for Guanajuato, his birthplace, where the national festivities attending his seventieth birthday are to begin. Various people were reading him drafts of commendatory speeches and taking flashlight photos while he listened. I thought it might be a good opportunity to get him to review his attitudes, and he was glad to do so, screwing up his nose and eyes but not otherwise changing his expression as he answered my first question with his characteristic falsetto giggle. How did he find art getting along in the Soviet Union?

"From the capitalist point of view? Bad! But from the point of view of the public living under socialism—excellent. Good for the artist, too, because the artist is in direct contact with millions for the first time in history and his product is the direct answer to their desires and taste."

Nothing new in that direction. I changed the subject. This morning at Inés Amor's gallery I had met an American collector named Bowles Rogers who claimed to have the greatest Orozco easel picture, a Crucifixion, and commented that Orozco "could only paint the compassionate pictures in his early pre-Expressionist manner."

"Do you find Orozco's work 'compassionate,' Diego?"

"Orozco," he began, interlacing his fingers across his stomach, "was the only great artist of the counterrevolution. The counterrevolution, like the revolution, is an expression of humanity. Positive-negative poles exist in art, as in electricity, and the genius (Orozco) is the electrical spot produced. The greatness of the artist is not a moral but an esthetic question. We can say at least that Orozco avoided the pitfall of meaningless or trivial subject matter, the curse of most art today, by always fighting

militantly against the state of things as they are. But he was a nihilist. He felt no compassion, made no affirmation. Because society disapproved of Hitler, he was for him. Like Don Quixote."

"How about Siqueiros?" I asked.

"I have no opinion. I am like Picasso when asked about Braque: 'He's my wife; and when he's not, he's my shadow.'"

"Tamayo?"

"I respond to the beauty of Tamayo's painting, its *Mexican* quality—like these *calaveras* you see hanging about this room. In my opinion, Tamayo's a great artist. [Wait till the papers get hold of this latest switch, I thought![1]] Siqueiros is totally foreign to my sensibility and thought; what he paints and how he paints it doesn't please me. I don't approve of it esthetically—or politically either, for that matter! I approve of Tamayo, the progressive bourgeois, more politically than I do Siqueiros, the Communist in good standing! You may quote that!"

"And the younger artists; Cuevas, for instance?"

"Cuevas? It's typical of the homosexuals that they approve of his kind of art which exalts the evil in mankind without wishing to change it. Just as they approve of sadism and masochism. Pessimistic and abstract art is their kind of art. It is no accident that Cuevas is having a success in the United States. The imperialists find his kind of art—yes, and Orozco's too—useful. The State Department and the FBI naturally don't want an art here that gives the Mexican confidence in himself; they prefer to see him writhing in despair, his development stopped. Go to the *Taller* (workshop) if you want to see the other kind. Or to the painting of a man like Zalce in Morelia."

Diego went on to express the view that Juan O'Gorman was the healthiest artistic force in Mexico today and alone had created a new architecture expressive of Mexico and the future. I asked him if this ruled out Candela.

"Candela? Candela is a genius of construction, but as an architect he is without taste. Look at his church. The interior is interesting as a reflection of the Gothic in new materials, but

[1] They did, the following week, under the headline: "TAMAYO IS 'MILLIONAIRES' OFFICE BOY' BUT DIEGO WHO SAID THAT NOW LOVES HIM."

the exterior is very repulsive." He laughed. "Well, why shouldn't I approve of that? It will keep people out of the church! Maybe Candela feels about religion the way I do!"

Frank Lloyd Wright, he concluded, was "the greatest plastic genius in the world today." When I remarked that Wright didn't like painting, Diego replied: "Naturally—because modern painting is so bad! His architecture is great painting. It doesn't need any assistance from the modern painter."

December 9

With O'Gorman to Diego's "tomb" for the climactic birthday rites. If it isn't a tomb—this square fortress of gray volcanic rock with serpent gargoyles and tiny triangular apertures—it's as close an approximation to the neo-Egyptian Secret Society "Tombs" at Yale (vintage 1890–1910) as I've ever seen. Juan considers it beautiful.

We had a conversation on the way out that throws a good deal of light on this neo-Aztec cult of the intellectual leftists, as Candela calls it. O'Gorman thinks that most of the archeologists of Mexico, including Covarrubias, and especially Caso, are phonies. As an example, he cited their "rejection" of the "discovery" of Cuauhtémoc's "bones" in Guerrero several years ago. (Cuauhtémoc, it will be recalled, was Moctezuma's successor who led the last-ditch resistance of the Aztecs until Cortés captured him.) Carbon-14 tests, O'Gorman said, had definitely proved the bones to date from the 1520s. "But this wasn't enough for the archeologists. They still rejected them."

"But, Juan," I expostulated, "what did it prove that the bones date from the 1520s? Hundreds of thousands of Indians were killed in the 1520s, weren't they? And, besides, isn't Guerrero, where the bones were found, hundreds of miles from Lake Petén in Guatemala, where Cortés is known to have hanged Cuauhtémoc?"

"The point is," Juan answered patiently, "that the archeologists' rejection of the bones was politically wrong. Mexico *needs* a concrete symbol of the first resistance to the foreign exploiter. The archeologists' rejection of the discovery stemmed from the fact that they are poorly paid by the government and have to depend on grants from the United States." He added

that the discovery of Tomb Number 7 at Monte Alban was the work of a "real" archeologist on Caso's staff but that Caso had taken all the credit for it.

* * *

When Diego finally arrived, there were hundreds of people assembled in the plaza in front of his monument. Grinning broadly, his head covered with bits of confetti, the artist waddled through the cheering throng and was escorted to a paper-decked "throne." Here, amid much singing and eulogizing, he "received," a handful of Roman candles in one hand—babies first, as he beamed on one and all that froglike benevolence.

Darting among the crowd, small boys carried on their heads papier-mâché effigies of bulls; from these, firecrackers exploded at intervals as the boys pretended to run down and gore the fleeing spectators. During a moment of quiet, I talked to Lupe Marin, Diego's first wife whose body is immortalized in the Chapingo frescoes, and who is still a fiercely beautiful though now somewhat angular brunette. Best-Maugard, Roberto Montenegro, Xavier Guerrero, and others among the second rank of Mexican painters had also come to offer their homage. Diego in his acceptance speech remarked gracefully that "eulogies coming from such diverse political quarters prove only that Diego Rivera does not exist. It must be Mexico that you are congratulating: Mexico that has come of age."

December 11

My introduction to Dr. Atl came by way of an American girl who had taken some of the pictures for his book on the eruption of Parícutin. Though I never met her face to face, I got the impression that she was one of many who are said to be very possessive over their hero. When the time she suggested proved impossible for my schedule, she said, "I don't feel you're being very grateful."

I am, though, because Atl more than lived up to my expectations. I found him in the glass-roofed patio of his home in Colonia Santa Maria, surrounded by his latest landscapes and playing with two children. He was propelling himself about most vigorously in a wheel chair, his head encased in an old-

fashioned knitted stocking cap. His magnificent white beard and leathery skin, but even more the flashing, twinkling, restlessly inquisitive blue eyes, made me think of Leonardo's late self-portrait. Was the parallelism conscious? I wondered about this when he told me that his latest pictures had been painted partly to capture certain effects of condensation at Popocatépetl's crater and partly to try out a new medium he has invented to eliminate the high glaze of oil paint by mixing in a dominant proportion of tempera. His beard was a little yellow about the lips—probably from nicotine; the hands thin and gnarled but still sinewy.

When I asked him whether he considered himself more scientist than artist, he replied in his halting English: "Both. I have been painting, for instance, the heavenly bodies; but I would also like to conquer the moon and some of the planets in a space ship before I die. It's a pity to leave them to religion!"

"You're opposed to all religions, Doctor?"

(A pretty young Spanish woman, mother of the two children, said to me half seriously behind her hand: "Except his own. He *is* God, you know.")

"Religion AND philosophy," Atl replied.

"And the new religion of Cuauhtémoc?" I asked the original Indianist with some trepidation.

"That too, of course."

"Then Cuauhtémoc wasn't a hero?"

"He was a martyr. The heroes were Moctezuma and Cuitlahuac. There's a big difference. But you have raised a most interesting point. Unfortunately it's a subtle distinction and I can't possibly make it in English. I will say that the Cuauhtémoc cult is a mistake."

"And democracy?" I asked. "You're still against that, too, Doctor?"

"Totally," he replied good-naturedly. "The first action of democracy was to assassinate Socrates."

"Well," I continued, "you said you were just as much against the philosophers."

He laughed. "Yes. True. But Socrates was the philosopher of common sense. That's why neither the metaphysicians nor the religionists could tolerate him."

I would have liked to ask whether his faith in the lost "continent" of Atlantis, which he proposes to verify from a helicopter, is wholly unmetaphysical; and why he had had his leg interred in Parícutin's crater;[1] but I could see he was tiring.

As we were parting, I did ask him how he had lost the leg.

"Doctors! Entirely the result of the stupidity of some doctors. It happened four years ago—but what does it matter? I get around. The immediate question is: how are you going to find a taxi way out here? You won't, of course. So hop into my limousine which is at the door and tell the chauffeur to take you wherever you want to go."

* * *

In the evening, after a poker game with some students from Mexico City College, we all drove outside the city to see the post-midnight fiesta of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Extraordinary spectacle of thousands of pilgrims from all over Mexico, many sleeping in their *serapes* in the angles of the badly listing Basilica. This was erected to mark the spot where the Indian Juan Diego told Bishop Zumárraga of his visions.

The time was 1531, just ten years after the Conquest, and it was still touch and go whether the Indians would submit to the new faith or be exterminated as they had been in Haiti and Cuba. Cortés' successors were well on the way to exterminating them when Zumárraga, this extraordinary old man whom Charles V had selected because of his Christlike rejection of royal alms even for the temple, made a revolutionary pronouncement. The Indian, he told the Emperor, must no longer be sold as a slave, must not be treated as a beast of burden, must be protected by a well-enforced code. Coming at the very time when the more fiery Bishop Las Casas was in Spain crying out to the whole Christian world the atrocities of the Conquistadors, Zumárraga's more temperate plea had its effect. But if the reforming spirit of Zumárraga, together with his establishment of printing presses and paper mills, and his wise recommendation that mulberry trees and silkworms should complement mining to

[1] Quite possibly to poke fun at the symbolism of Obregón's *arm*, which is displayed in a jar of formaldehyde in a pretentious monument on Insurgentes.

give New Spain a balanced economy—if these were all, the old archbishop would survive in our memory as a humanist but not as a candidate for canonization.

That he is a candidate, together with the illiterate Aztec Juan Diego, is owed to the circumstances of the miraculous appearance of the Virgin at this spot, and of the no less miraculous power which that occurrence has exerted upon the subsequent history of the Mexican people. When Juan Diego had first reported his vision to Zumárraga, together with the Virgin's command that a church be established at Tepeyac to commemorate her particular concern for the welfare of the Indians, the bishop had been sceptical. But when the peasant had brought him a bundle of the most beautiful flowers of Castile from the desert hillside, and he had seen imprinted on the coarse cloak in which Juan Diego carried them the image of the Virgin, dark-faced, in all her splendor, Zumárraga had accepted the miracle and caused the original shrine to be built.

"Almost all the writers who have dealt with the culture and problems of Mexico (of whatever religious or economic persuasion) are agreed that the one factor that has created and preserved Mexico as a nation has been the apparition and veneration of Our Lady of Guadalupe." Thus Donald Demarest,[1] and the evidence to bear him out is not only here. Her image is everywhere—in the buses and taxis, in stores, on postcards, in the homes of rich as well as poor, tattooed on arms, woven into *matadors'* hats, chalked on mountainsides, flowered in public parks, outlined in neon. Politicians have acknowledged her as the only unifying force in a country immemorially divided by geography, language, revolution, poverty, and persecution. Indianists have conceded that nothing else could have arrested the cultural disintegration that overcame the Indians elsewhere. Above all, the very fact of the survival of Roman Catholicism in Mexico—a survival in the teeth of the most virulent and systematic antireligious campaign of modern times outside the Iron Curtain—must be attributed to the efficacy of this symbol. And that it *more* than survives, what visitor like myself, an unbeliever,

[1] *The Dark Virgin*: The Book of Our Lady of Guadalupe. A documentary anthology edited by Donald Demarest and Coley Taylor. Freeport, Maine, 1956.

familiar with the half-hearted Sunday lip service prevailing in the States among Catholics no less than Protestants, can doubt? The crowds in the innumerable churches, even on weekdays, testify to it. The solitary Indian before his tiny shrine along the loneliest road, his arms stretched out in the sign of the cross, bears witness. This phenomenal mass demonstration in Tepeyac tonight confirms it.

Many of the pilgrims, who had covered hundreds of miles on foot, were making the last lap on their knees, while ambulances, their sirens screaming, carried away the fallen. We joined the crush of penitents pushing their way gently (or not so gently) in and out of the nave, over which hung a dense and stinking silence. We were literally catapulted out of the darkness on a wave of bodies. Up and down the floodlit ramps we continued, buying hot meat-filled rolls and soft drinks at the candle-lit booths; then, in the great plaza, watching the Aztec dances in costume to savage drum rhythms wherever a clearing could be found.

Outside the main gate, as we left, a macabre scene brought us back with a jolt into the world of nonparticipating "spectaculars." Klieg lights had been set up, and in front of a gaudily painted banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Hollywood directors in fur-collared parkas were directing a moving picture of *well-dressed* penitents.

5 ON THE TRAIL OF CORTÉS

Teotihuacán—The Battlefield of Otumba—Tlaxcala —Trouble at Perote—Jalapa—What Happened at Cempoala—San Juan de Ulua and Veracruz—Córdoba and Orizaba—An Orozco Ruin—Puebla—Malinche and the Pyramid of Cholula—Roadblock in the Pass of Cortés—We Make It from Mexico—How to Celebrate Christmas

December 13, Tlaxcala

Left Mexico at 9:00 this morning with Beebe, the painter Don Bloom, and his wife June, whom we had met at San Miguel. Since the purpose of this particular trip is to cover as much of the various routes of Cortés as possible, we drove out of the city by way of Tacuba, site of the causeway on which the Conqueror suffered his disastrous retreat, and headed for the battlefield of Otumba.

Nothing of the causeway remains, of course, though the tree under which Cortés wept for his losses on that "sad night" (the *Noche Triste*) is still shown to visitors. The causeway was one of three that linked Tenochtitlán—as the capital was then called —with the mainland. The city occupied an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco, which has since been drained. The other causeways led to Ixtapalapa and Coyoacán in the south, and Tepeyac, where now stands the shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe, in the north. The Tacuba causeway was destroyed during the retreat, which took place on June 30, 1520. The others were torn up when Cortés returned with a new army the following year and destroyed the Aztec empire totally.

After the rout of the *Noche Triste,* Cortés had steered the remnant of his shattered forces north and east, in order to make contact with his Tlaxcalan allies (to see if they were *still* allies),

and this had brought him to Otumba, where the Aztecs made a final and almost successful attempt to overpower him with sheer manpower.

Otumba is within sight of the great complex of pyramids and other ruins known as Teotihuacán, marking the religious capital of the classic civilization of the Valley of Mexico which preceded the Toltecs and the Aztecs. The site covers more than six square miles and has been systematically (but far from exhaustively) excavated by Gamio, Vaillant, Caso, Bórbolla and many other famous archeologists. The people who built Teotihuacán deliberately destroyed it in 658 A.D., about four centuries before the Toltecs, who were once presumed to have been its builders, moved in.

The principal Toltec deity had been Quetzalcoatl, the Feathered Serpent, also worshiped by the Toltec-Mayas in Yucatán and Guatemala and, by some accounts, reputed to have been *white*, with a beard, and to have left Mexico, around the time of the Toltec migration southward, on a raft, heading east. Moctezuma and his predecessors on the Aztec throne had neglected Quetzalcoatl, a god of culture who, as some declare, abhorred human sacrifice. Having given the primacy in their pantheon to Huitzilopochtli, the god of war, who demanded blood sacrifices insatiably, the Aztecs had made bitter enemies of the vassal tribes that surrounded them, especially of the Tlaxcalans, whom they had never been able to subjugate. And it was partly because Moctezuma felt a sense of guilt over the neglect of Quetzalcoatl, whom the Tlaxcalans continued to worship, and because he half suspected that Cortés was this injured deity's reincarnation, that he made the indecisive maneuvers that led to his destruction. (The serpent heads on the so-called Temple of Quetzalcoatl here were actually carved many centuries before the Toltecs came and so presumably have nothing to do with the Feathered Serpent.)

It has always surprised me that Bernal Díaz, that excellent reporter of the Conquest, makes no mention whatever of the Pyramid of the Sun, which is larger than the Great Pyramid of Egypt and must have been the most considerable edifice in Mexico, though he passed directly by it. It is 210 feet high. It covers 55,000 square yards. And its mass, formed of some three

million adobe bricks faced with stone, is estimated to weigh 2,980,000 tons.

The climb to the pyramid's summit (especially if one looks down) is rather frightening. I had climbed it in 1937, but this time, with my five-year-old daughter to worry about and headed straight for the top, I was glad to settle for the first platform.

We crossed the plaza and poked around in the *subterráneos*, where some of the ancient frescoes are being restored. Many of the originals were lying in piles in the corners. When we picked up a piece to inspect it, it crumbled to the touch.

A *muchacho* outside tried to sell us an obsidian arrowhead. "Original, Señor!" He wanted eight *pesos* for it, and we finally bought it for two, whereupon a second *muchacho* came up, looked at it scornfully, and said: "Copy, *patrón;* look here: *mine* is an original," and proceeded to try to sell us an identical smaller one for three *pesos*. The first *muchacho* laughed at him, and we laughed at them. Both, of course, laughed at *us* as soon as we had left. Near the Quetzalcoatl serpent heads and Tlalocs (effigies of the rain god that look like World War I gas masks) a third *muchacho* was playing a flute. I had heard that these boys could imitate the sound of a coyote stealing chickens. I asked him to. "No more coyotes any more, Señor, and no chickens either!"

About 11:00, we drove over a very rough and dusty road to Otumba. In the village, Don and I took photos of the shadows cast on a sunlit white wall by small flapping flags of paper with the cut-out words "*Viva La Purísima Concepción.*" They were attached to strings across the courtyard of the church. Finally, after much questioning and searching, we found, between Otumba and another sleepy village, Arapusto, two modest markers commemorating Cortés's battle. The field, now sown to corn and dotted with bits of obsidian, is within sight not only of the pyramids but of Popocatépetl and Ixtaccíhuatl far to the southeast. One marker reads: "To those fallen in defense of their country in the battle of Otumba." The other, a cross, commemorates "The Liberation Action of Cuauhtémoc against Hernán Cortés, July 9, 1590." (The battle took place in 1520.) I wondered if anyone had visited this spot since Archibald MacLeish, and remembered the fine lines he puts in the mouth of the old soldier:

What are we? When will our fame come?
An old man in a hill town
a handful of
Dust under the dry grass at Otumba
Unknown names
hands vanished
faces
Many gone from that day
unspeakable numbers
Lives forgotten
deeds honored in strangers
"That which I have myself seen and the fighting" . . .

Dinner in Tlaxcala—"the corn land, synonymous with paradise"—after an hour's wait and much conspiracy between the master of the Hotel Don Quixote and his excited *criadas*. It was served *muy sabroso*, as advertised, and we went to bed half expecting to be roused from our sleep by the roll of Aztec *teponaxtli*.

December 14, Jalapa

This is as far toward Veracruz as we have progressed, the iron clamps that hold the left rear spring having cracked and fallen off, leaving us five kilometers beyond Zacatepec about noon, with the spring dangling in the dust. Fortunately a kind police officer happened by in his car. Not only did he supervise the emergency tying up of the stricken spring with rope, but he escorted us (the Blooms and all our luggage in his car) as far as Perote. There he waited for us two hours while new clamps were forged, threaded, bolted, and attached. I realized, if I hadn't already guessed it, that what Mexico may lack in efficiency and a sense of time is more than compensated for by an almost universal eagerness to give without reserve to anyone in need of help.

Before this had happened we had spent several hours in Tlaxcala examining the ancient Franciscan monastery in which the Conquerors stood by while Fray Martín de Valencia baptized four Tlaxcalan chiefs and preached the first Christian sermon on the North American continent. Nearby is the wonderfully ornate and gilded church of Ocotlan. Though Mexico's

churrigueresque has never appealed to me, I am willing to go along with Flandrau who observes that the use of gold leaf in decoration is like money: "A little is pleasant, merely too much is vulgar; but a positively staggering amount of it seems to justify itself."

Before descending the hill on which these churches lie, we took some pictures of the town with its gleaming domes against the pine-dotted, white-limestone foothills with the full-length, recumbent Snow Woman of Ixtaccíhuatl in the distance. Here, but mostly gone now, was the timber from which Cortés made his brigantines, porters carrying them disassembled over the mountains for the final assault on Tenochtitlán. The Tlaxcalans had fought Cortés bitterly at first, protecting their independence with the same zeal they had always shown in resisting conquest by the Aztecs. But internal dissension, their custom of hiding losses by burying their dead during battle, and their eagerness to take prisoners caused their undoing. Cortés's soldiers—anointing their wounds, as was their custom, with fat cut from the buttocks of dead enemies—rested in the almost Oriental splendor of ancient Mexico's second city and were now prepared to march on the Aztec capital with allies, armor bearers and a protected rear.

Just before our mishap at Zacatepec, we observed a more serious one in a region of flooded lowlands mirroring the snowy peak of Orizaba. A macadam causeway now runs across this region that may have been the cause of Cortés's detouring far to the north through Zacatán and the deserts before swinging south to Tlaxcala. The driver of a truckload of oranges had gone to sleep at the wheel. His crushed body had already been taken from the downward-pointing cab and a half-dozen laborers supervised by a couple of soldiers were picking the thousands of oranges from the shallow water and tossing them up the bank to the causeway. Black buzzards, the ubiquitous garbage collectors of Mexico, wheeled overhead.

While we waited in the garage at Perote, Don Bloom passed the hours sketching the gaskets, fan belts and flywheels hanging on the whitewashed walls in a fine disorder. I asked him whether he did any "composing" with such materials, as I did photographing them, to bring out accidental resemblances to human

figures, totems, etc. He said he didn't. "I prefer to recompose when transferring this material to the canvas."

While he was working on one of these powerful black-and-whites, June remarked to me that Don's approach to art is the reverse of her own. While he is satisfied to let the "content" develop "unconsciously," almost as an afterthought, she paints "human relations" directly. When she sees a woman carrying a heavy burden, for example, this contrasts so violently with her own way of life that she wants to paint it. Don overheard what we were saying and suggested that he might be "compensating" for a lifelong mechanical inefficiency by handling such bits and pieces with a cavalier disregard for their actual uses. When I asked him why he shied away from approaching "content" directly, he said he didn't know except that it might be out of fear of producing anything "banal" or "corny." Both he and June apply these words to the work of all the Mexican muralists save Tamayo, seeing in it little more than "newspaper cartooning."

On our way to Perote we passed a lake in the crater of an extinct volcano that must have been there in Cortés's time. After Perote there were rugged lava beds, a black background for every variety of cactus, and then the abrupt descent through green fields and wooden houses and low-lying clouds that reminded me of West Virginia, into the thriving capital of Veracruz province, gay and modern and glittering with its pre-Christmas tinsel and window displays, for all the drizzle of rain: Jalapa.

December 15, Veracruz

Leaving jasmine-scented Jalapa at seven, we drove to Cempoala, where Cortés had found his first native ally. This chieftain of the Totonacs, whom the soldiers called "the fat *cacique*," has not, understandably, became a national hero. The Spaniards owed him a great deal. Coming here directly from their landfall on the island of San Juan de Ulua in Veracruz harbor, they found the first direct evidence of dissension within Moctezuma's empire. Two ambassadors had just arrived from Tenochtitlán and were about to depart with their usual quota of sacrificial victims for the altar of Huitzilopochtli. Cortés insisted that the

fat *cacique* seize them and put them in a cage. But then he showed the first of those strokes of genius that deserve to rank him with the great captains. "I recalled," he wrote Charles V, "that passage of the Evangelist which says, 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation.' " He had his men *release* the caged ambassadors, secretly of course, and speed them to Moctezuma—with gifts. Thus he was able to pose as the "friend" of both rulers, laying the ground for the confusion, suspicion, and treachery-among-allies that would eventually play into his hands. Further evidence, say the Indianists, of the man's unprincipled conduct. But Cortés, among the "civilized," had been perfectly frank about his motives from the outset. When they had offered him a *hacienda* in Haiti after his arrival from Spain at the age of nineteen, he had spurned it. "I came here," he said, "not to till the soil like a peasant, but for gold." The surprising thing about him was that, unlike any of the other Conquistadors, he quickly came to the conclusion that nothing but fair treatment of the conquered, alliance with them in administration and rebuilding, *and intermarriage*, could lead to a stable future in New Spain. It was not to be. The second wave of invaders, armchair generals, the real "exploiters," had other ideas; and they soon succeeded in getting Cortés recalled.

But meanwhile, here in Cempoala, Cortés was carrying out his second stroke. He marched back to Veracruz and burned his ships so that the timid would have no way of turning back, and prepared—after knocking over the Totonac idols and "converting" the fat *cacique's* priests—to advance on Tlaxcala.

The ruins of Cempoala are well off the beaten track and not easy to find. Archeologists discovered them only late in the nineteenth century and the tourists have yet to come. The temple platforms, composed of river-rounded boulders set in mortar, are a poor man's Monte Alban. At the top of one we found faint traces of rose-colored murals—dot-and-circle, bird-and-circle—and in the rubble of another a small, intricately reliefed stone seal. The nearby village—it boasted 30,000 inhabitants at the time of the Conquest, is now reduced to fewer than 3,000—is enveloped in the aura of decay. But Beebe was enraptured to discover under a shed a sow suckling her brood, which included a week-old puppy.

Blooming but leafless *ahuehuetes* lined the sugar-cane fields on the way out. At the fords in the shallow river, teams of oxen were stopping to drink; and on the banks, peasant women were washing their clothes in wooden tubs filled with dazzling suds.

Cortés had returned to Cempoala, later on, for another of his strokes. After conquering the Tlaxcalans and entering Tenochtitlán peacefully by way of Cholula, he had received news that a second expeditionary force from Cuba—dispatched by the jealous governor of that island, Diego Velasquez—had landed at Veracruz with orders to bring him back in chains for exceeding his authority. Placing Moctezuma under "house arrest," with his burly but not brilliant lieutenant, Alvarado, in command, Cortés had taken half of his four hundred effectives and crept up on the new expeditionary force. Numbering close to a thousand, it was commanded by Panfilo de Narvaez and was enjoying the hospitality of the fat *cacique*. On a rainy night, the battle-hardened veterans had swooped down on these soft revelers, routed them, captured Narvaez, more than doubled their own fighting force—and burnt Narvaez' fleet. Only Cortés's misjudgment of Alvarado's intelligence and nerve prevented a triumphal reentry into the Aztec capital and a peaceable assimilation of Moctezuma's empire.

The road to Veracruz became more beautiful and tropical as we descended. Above-ground graveyards with a variety of sky-blue and terra-cotta tombstones among the white, some decorated with chaplets of lilies and some with big rosettes of straw, lined the way. A dense perfume of frangipani added to the enchantment of these miniature cities of the dead.

After a flat tire and a refreshing swim in the blue river waters below Puente Nacional, we drove into Veracruz and out onto the causeway that now connects San Juan de Ulua with the mainland. A veritable forest of colossal three-legged concrete monsters blocked the way. We speculated on their function. Anchors? Don dubbed them "The Russian Women Practicing Gymnastics." They proved more interesting and more photogenic than the neglected fort with its rotting stone. We stopped in one courtyard to wonder why an iron bar, now corroded by the salt air to razor thinness, had been needed in a

dungeon window ten inches wide by two feet high, twelve feet above the pavement in the yard-thick walls. In the pavement itself are square openings, dropping thirty feet to stagnant water, that might have been *oubliettes*. But the "castle," linked as it now is to the commercial mainland and surrounded by petroleum drums and seedy administration buildings, has lost whatever charm or terror it may have had in the thirties and forties of the last century when General Santa Anna, feigning sickness on his nearby *hacienda*, was giving Mexico lessons in the costs of one-man rule, and General Guadalupe Victoria, farther back in the hills, lessons in incorruptible courage.

Manga de Clavo, this *hacienda* to which Santa Anna would repair when bored with one or another of his dozen presidencies, we couldn't find. From it, he would periodically return to the capital in "triumph," to oust the honest but incompetent Gomez Farías, or to oversee the ceremonial embalming of his leg, blown off in one of the comic-opera "defenses" of Veracruz, and its solemn consecration in a national shrine in Mexico City. No one we spoke to had heard of Manga de Clavo; and the fact that the once-great name of Antonio López de Santa Anna touched no responsive chord anywhere struck me as happily fitting.

December 16, Puebla

A veritable caricature of a Texan we met at Puente Nacional yesterday told us, among a dozen other pieces of alarmist information, that Puebla should be pronounced "Pablo" and that if we paid less than forty *pesos* for a room in Veracruz, we'd be "rolled." (We paid ten and slept soundly without locks on the doors.) He also said that we should never travel in Mexico without a gun "because there's a lot of hungry Indians in parts of this Godforsaken country and if you shoot straight up in the air when they start for you, they'll run like hell!"

We arrived in "Pablo" about 9:00 after a late start from Veracruz. It had rained for about an hour before we left, and the rivers of water in the streets made us wonder how anybody there gets around or accomplishes anything when the rainy season really sets in. We drove through pretty lush country to Córdoba—red earth planted to sugar, tobacco, and tomatoes; groves of mango and bananas, interspersed with coconut palms,

papaya trees, poinsettia, oleander, and a gorgeous orange-flowering vine we couldn't name that creeps up everything vertical. Orchids hung from the live-oaks, and every house front, no matter how humble, was decorated with a score of tiny pots or cans, each with its individual fern or geranium.

Córdoba is a city of flowers where once a colony of Confederate soldiers, fleeing across the Texas border in 1864, formed a short-lived settlement during Maximilian's reign. Characteristically, the members of this "Carlota Colony," as they called it, proclaimed themselves ready "to shed what remains of Confederate blood in this and the other country for the Empress whom we all love and admire so much." Yankee newspapers ridiculed them as "seedy Southern exiles" and Juárez later drove them home.

Don Bloom has been wanting to stop and sketch every time we pass an outdoor butcher's shop, so to speed things up we've told him that any meat *we* see first is out of bounds. We took a very rough half-hour detour to look for *huipils* at Amatlán, but the only three we could find were priced by their owners at 150, 200, and 1,000 *pesos,* and the flowers embroidered on them looked like cheap candy. These prices, we decided, must be attributable not to tourism—no tourist, surely, would have braved this road—but to agents from the curio shops on Avenida Juárez who had read the same deceptive paragraph we had in Frances Toor's pocket guide. Don was happy, though, having found a stall in the main square with several slabs of the bloodiest beef hanging on hooks against a piece of canvas. When I got my camera out and asked the butcher to rearrange his scales to clarify the composition, he thought we were *all* crazy.

At Orizaba, we stopped and asked a dozen pedestrians where Orozco's early fresco was to be found. We couldn't find one who had even heard of the painter. When finally by merest chance we stumbled into the moldering schoolhouse where it was, the sight of the ruin it has become shocked us. It is a powerful, splendid piece of work, even in this state, but one whole side has crumbled away, and the weather (the fresco is painted around an arched window without glass) is beginning to fade and disintegrate the rest. Why, we asked an attendant, couldn't glass be put over the window?

"Because nobody," he replied, "would clean the window, and then nobody could see the *view*."

Immediately outside Orizaba, one begins to climb. We climbed into a cloud, never seeing the nearby *pico* of Mexico's highest mountain, and didn't emerge from it until well out of the tropics on the plateau that stretches from Tehuacán to Puebla.

December 17, Cholula

Spent the morning in Puebla buying assorted folk objects, including a tiny *retablo* on tin of Christ in bed. We also visited blocks and blocks of colorful market containing, among other things, some wonderful life-size paper clowns, and I bought Beebe an embroidered peasant dress for ten *pesos*. The architecture of Puebla, compounded of earth colors, gimcrack cornices, and a profusion of homemade tiles, is entertaining. We stayed in a ten-*peso* hotel not far from the main square on Avenida Reforma that must have once been a *palacio*. The ceiling in our room was eighteen feet high and in the middle of it was a baroque rosette of white plaster and gold leaf that no doubt once supported an imposing chandelier. In our time a single unshaded (and very dim) bulb hung from its edge, casting an uncertain light upon the sparse paintless furniture and cracked washbowl. There was water in the bowl only three hours a day and the frosted-glass doors fitted the doorway neither at top nor bottom.

Here in Cholula, to which we drove at noon, a similar atmosphere of vanished splendor hangs over everything, from the dusty, unpaved square to the profusion of empty, or almost empty, churches. We were told that President Calles, the fanatical anti-Catholic who preceded Cárdenas, left Cholula strictly alone, but perhaps the inhabitants responded to his propaganda without coercion. The town's reputed 365 churches were established, they say, by the Conquistadors themselves on the sites of 365 pagan *teocalis*. The dominant one, housing a doll-like image of the Virgin of Los Remedios, stands on top of the great "Pyramid of Quetzalcoatl." The latter, we were told by a pleasantly drunken guide who had taken us over, had been deliberately buried in rubble by the Cholulans when they heard Cortés was approaching from Tlaxcala.

The Cholulans would have been better advised to flee the

accursed city. They gave Cortés a royal welcome with flowers and music and the perfume of aromatic turpentine from swinging censers. But in the night Malinche came to her master and informed him of a plot to ambush the Spaniards on their way to Tenochtitlán. This Malinche, whom the Spaniards called Marina, is one of the tragic and mysterious figures of the Conquest. Her profound understanding of the Indian soul, even more than her services as interpreter of the Nahuatl language, was the key to Cortés's diplomatic triumphs. The Indians throughout Mexico venerated her as a goddess, according to Bernal Díaz. But in the centuries to follow, her name became synonymous with witchcraft and evil and is used to this day to frighten children. Was it love for Cortés that made her betray her people? (Cortés made her his mistress while it served his purpose, later turned her over to a depraved underling.) Was it a prophetic sense of Mexico's destiny? Or was it merely the will to be master rather than slave?

Whatever her motivation, Malinche's loyalty to the Conquerors never wavered, and here in Cholula she told Cortés that his 2,000 porters were to be secretly armed, and at a given signal were to fall upon them, whereupon the Aztecs would descend from the forests and complete the massacre. There may not have been a word of truth in the story, but Cortés, as he later wrote the Emperor, was "determined to surprise rather than be surprised." No man to take an unnecessary risk, he figured that in any event a show of naked force would strike terror into Moctezuma's already quavering heart. Enticing the porters and the Cholulan chieftains into a courtyard, the Spaniards, at a prearranged signal, fell upon them with every weapon in their arsenal and butchered them to a man. Cortés' Tlaxcalan allies were for completing the affair by looting and exterminating the city, but Cortés, always calculating and farsighted in those moments of triumph that lure lesser men into overreaching their hand, preferred to leave potential friends behind him—especially if the friends might be depended upon to quarrel with one another.

The scene of the massacre is dominated by the great pyramid. Like the temple in Teotihuacán that also takes its name from

Quetzalcoatl, it is misnamed, having been built in pre-classic times by the same race that built the Pyramid of the Sun, and out of the same materials. The Cholula pyramid is broader than the one at Teotihuacán, but not so high. In 1931 the Mexican government did some extensive excavating. They wired passageways (connecting the superimposed pyramids of different epochs) for electricity. At one position in these catacombs it is possible to look up a tunnel to the apex, 450 steps above, and down, another fifty steps, to the base. In an adjoining passageway, frescoes in red and black of the serpent god whose worship the Toltecs did finally introduce are fairly well preserved.

The church atop is a renovated horror encased in gold leaf (from Philadelphia, we were told), but a small altar to the right of the entrance is filled with some remarkably surrealistic exvotos: a woman being pulled out from under a speeding train; a man clambering from a wrecked plane that looks as though it had been built by the Wright brothers; a young woman on her deathbed "saved" by a combination of two doctors, five relatives, a priest, two small angels, and at least a dozen half-emptied bottles.

As one faces north to Tlaxcala, Mount Malinche lies to the right and Ixtaccíhuatl to the left. A small cratered peak in the foreground of the snowcapped giants is called Tecajete. The ramps to the apex of the pyramid are bordered by rows of small leafless trees with star-shaped crimson blossoms. Our weaving "guide," who wasn't making much sense by this time, muttered that the tree was called *colorín* and that its petals are cooked and eaten. He smacked his lips. As we stood there surveying the awesome panorama, bestial cries and roars ascended to us from an insane asylum at the base, mingled now and then with the hardly more reassuring shouts of a Mexican soap opera on the radio. Still another incongruity was an ice chest in the chapel bearing the image of Disney's Donald Duck.

Don and I spent the rest of the afternoon with a maker of fiesta figures—bulls, eagles, bicycle riders, and the like—that carry firecrackers in their bamboo understructure. Don sketched while I photographed. The owner, whose name was Rafael Zeron, was a poet as well as a most talented craftsman.

December 18, Mexico

"Eight leagues from this city of Cholula [Cortés reported] there are two marvelously high mountains whose summits still at the end of August are covered with snow, so that nothing else can be seen of them. From the higher of the two both day and night a great volume of smoke often comes forth and rises up into the clouds as straight as a staff, with such force that though a very violent wind continuously blows over the mountain range yet it cannot change the direction of the column."

We arrived in the capital at 5:00 after an unsuccessful attempt to drive from Cholula between these peaks. Cortés was not handicapped with a car. After two flat tires in Cholula, we got as far as a village called Santiago, and even a little beyond it on a road more brutal than any I had encountered in Haiti, famous for its bone-rattling lines of communication. But when the road became a narrow uphill gulch filled with boulders four feet in diameter, where another yard further would have seen our crankcase suspended on one of these with the wheels flailing 10,000-foot-thin air, we reluctantly turned back to San Nicolás de los Ranchos. There, some idlers holding court in the police station had assured us that the road was passable to Amecameca. This aspect of the Mexican character is like Haiti, too; from the time of slavery it has been traditionally good policy never to say No.

We envied Cortés his horses, but admired most his foot soldiers who thought nothing of this trek through desert sands and volcanic ash; and especially the intrepid de Ordás and his ten men who scaled Popocatépetl with nothing but sandals on to protect their bare feet against the fire and ice—just to convince the Cholulans that the Spaniards were masters of whatever gods might dwell in that terrible crater.

December 22

With Dan Rowan and Terry Esser, two young students, one a painter, the other a poet, we finally made the Pass of Cortés —even if from the wrong direction. We drove from Coyoacán, where Cortés built his palace, to Xochimilco, and from there over a bad road to Chalco, and then, over a much better one,

to Amecameca—Aztec for "a town upon a town," the first having been buried in one of Popocatépetl's eruptions.

From Amecameca a fairly good dirt road hairpins into the pass, which is marked—but not at a point from which the Valley of Mexico is visible—with a modest bronze plaque depicting Cortés and his paladins facing their future. At this point the road splits three ways. We tried all three. To the right, up Popocatépetl, it was a race with the clouds closing in from the summit; they won and we turned back. The center road, presumably the one from Cholula that had foiled us, mounts through scattered pines just below timberline—and then suddenly forks. Which way? There was no one to ask and our map didn't show the roads at all. Could it be that the same fear of these mountains that Cortés encountered persists? A solitary woodcutter with two burro loads of firewood was the only human being we encountered during four hours in the area, and he was more tightlipped than Calvin Coolidge.

Returning to the monument, we followed the left fork into the higher slopes of Ixtaccíhuatl. Just short of the deep snow and the descending cloud barrier, we came upon what looked like a television relay station. If it was any kind of military installation it was pretty casually guarded, because one soldier lay on the ground asleep and the other regarded us languidly as we photographed everything in sight. We shared our lunch with them and coasted back to the monument. Neither of the mountains, whose caps had gleamed so brilliantly in the sun on the way up, was visible now. But a few kilometers down we caught our first glimpse of the valley. Perhaps this was the place where Bernal Díaz mentions the Cempoalans quitting, and from which de Ordás and his companions ascended to the crater. "Great things are done when men and mountains meet . . ." The old soldier reported a heavy fall of snow, but we (a month later in the year) were stripped to our waists in the blazing sun. The distant capital was barely visible in the haze over Chalco. The Conquistadors could not have glimpsed Tenochtitlán yet. But a little further down, where the snow might have stopped falling, we speculated whether in 1520 the sun might have reflected back from the sacrificial platforms atop those pyramids so poetically named for their dread deities: "Smoking Mirror" and "Hum-

mingbird on the Left." Far to the southwest the sun struck water or glass in several places—Cuernavaca?

We continued to descend. Suddenly rounding a curve we were astonished to see an American Indian stockade, complete with blockhouses and drawbridges, covering several acres. What was it doing here? We entered it and explored its dozen empty buildings for an hour. Was it a movie set? Or an abortive pleasure dome, begun but never finished by some Jorge Pasquel who had read of Henry Ford? Over the gates, branded in the wood, were the words "FORT LINCOLN." Within one log cabin a cardboard sign, flapping in the wind, bore the legend: "Congratulations to Herb and Emma." Maia turned on the car radio as we were leaving and out came the song (in English):

> Put on your old Easter bonnet
> With all the frills upon it
> . . . on Fifth Avenue!

Descending into the plain, we drove north from Chalco, this time to Chapingo, the government agricultural school whose chapel contains the earthy nudes by Diego Rivera which I had admired so much in 1937. This time the chapel was closed for repairs—cracks and some sort of fungus growth having appeared recently—but there were later murals, dating from 1940, and still in the most persuasive Rivera style. I was particularly impressed by life-size satirical portraits of President Ávila Camacho and his Minister of Agriculture, and by Diego's designs on the wooden doors to the chapel—interlocking dollar signs, crosses, and swords above impassive allegorical figures in high relief. Terry and Dan didn't go for any of it. Like the Blooms, they are too offended by the propaganda of the muralists to be open-minded about the formal qualities generated by it.

We returned to Coyoacán by way of Ixtapalapa, site of the ceremony to which the inhabitants of Tenochtitlán and Teotihuacán used to repair every fifty-two years, never knowing whether the sun would rise as usual or remain set forever. It was on the causeway from Ixtapalapa that Cortés and Moctezuma first met. And it was also here that Bernal Díaz got his first good look at the great complex of temples on the island, a sight "we could compare," he says, "to nothing but the

enchanted scenes we had read of in Amadis de Gaul . . . making us doubt whether we were asleep or awake." Today the town, dusty and run-down like all the villages we had passed through today, was given over to pre-Christmas *posadas.*

We got back just in time to attend a *posada* of our own. It was being given by the Demarests and most of the guests were Mexicans. Each of us was given a candle and a small printed booklet entitled "Novena para los Nueve Días de Jornadas en honor de los Santos José y Maria." Ordinarily one walks from house to house chanting the verses until the recognition of Joseph and Mary is reenacted and one is given shelter; but on this occasion we marched around the garden chanting our "Ora pro nobises" until the doors were thrown open and the feast disclosed. Then the *piñata*—a huge earthenware crock adorned with paper cornucopias and containing fruit, peanuts, candy, and coins—was raised on ropes above our heads and the children were blindfolded and given in turn a long pole with which to strike at it. From a second-story window Don manipulated it skillfully out of reach. But finally it was cracked open and then, amid shouts and laughter, the contents scattered on the ground were retrieved and pocketed or eaten:

Duerme, duerme, bello niño,
De mi amor en el regazo;
No me niegas tu cariño
En cuyo fuego me abrazo!

(Sleep, sleep, pretty child
Of my love, in my lap;
Don't deny me your love
In whose flame I am embraced.)

As we returned to San Angel, all was quiet over Mexico save the flutelike whistle of the nightwatchman on his hourly rounds.

6 MORE ARTISTS AND ARCHITECTS

O'Gorman in the Pedregal—Montenegro and Dr. Atl at Home—Siqueiros's "Public Face"—Memoirs of Alma Reed—Breakfast with Fred Davis—Goeritz and the Genesis of "El Eco"—Barragán's "Private Face"—Rivera Dictating—Siqueiros Revisited

December 23, Mexico

"I call these 'processed gardens,' " said Juan O'Gorman as we entered the all-modern, upper-bracket real-estate development in the Pedregal that has become one of the showplaces of Mexico. "There was too much of this crude volcanic rock, so Barragán and his boys put a clump of daisies here, a stand of *colorín* trees there, to soften them up. They spray it—with a detergent?—several times a day, to make the rocks look blacker, glossier, smarter. No more aggressiveness! Shall we say 'French boudoir rocks'?"

We snooped in two of the houses whose owners were probably in Cuernavaca for the weekend, telling the servants that we were making an architectural survey—the truth. The first house, built by Barragán himself for the Prieto family, was in the style Juan calls "Convent Modern"—austerely handsome, with high walls, timbered ceilings, paved courts, and curtained plate-glass windows giving on perfectly manicured lawns or formal gardens. The paintings, very large and mostly abstract. One out-Tamayoed Tamayo by having *real seeds* in its watermelon slices. The second house, which we were not encouraged to enter, sported an exterior abstract-expressionist mural wired for neon and a swimming pool with underwater mother-of-pearl mosaics and an artificial island that looked like licorice chewing gum. I asked Juan who lived in these houses.

"The *nouveau riche* of the Alemán regime."

"Then Ruiz Cortines hasn't clipped their wings?"

He laughed. "Ruiz—or Gris [gray] Cortines, as they call him—was installed by Alemán to straighten out the accounts and prevent scandal. They're very well satisfied with him—except, of course, for the extremists who would prefer to siphon *all* the profits into their pockets."

We drove to nearby University City, past the statue of Alemán, carved out of sandstone and larger than life, dressed as a rector. We got lost in the labyrinth of roads which are marked with hundreds of big arrows without any clues as to what they are pointing *at*. O'Gorman couldn't find the way to his own Library, though it loomed above us at various angles as we circled aimlessly for ten minutes. Finally we took a chance on a sign reading "COMMERCE—HUMANITIES" and got close enough to park the car. Juan looked at his masterpiece and shook his head even more disapprovingly. "Nothing," he said, "but the steps leading from the central campus, and the mosaics, are mine. If only *some* day they'd let me finish a building in my own way . . ."

He is too modest. This is one of the dozen most exciting buildings in the world. Not merely because it was the first to be surfaced entirely with mosaics but because the mosaics form a stunning geometry of color in the sunlight—even from miles away. The new Communications Center, half-way into town, a complex of buildings almost as large as Rockefeller Center, is also wholly mosaicked, but the Library came first. In the United States the "cost" would be "prohibitive." We'll have to wait until the labor unions become art-minded enough to donate their services—or the contractors contribute their profits. The millennium.

"Is it true," I asked O'Gorman, "that all the government appropriation for this University was channeled into the buildings, leaving nothing for equipment, even for chairs or desks?"

"They say so," he said. "My Library is designed for two million volumes. The 250,000 volumes now in it are the same 250,000 that were in the old building downtown. There are many private libraries in Mexico that are much better—at least qualitatively. The writer Alfonso Reyes', for example."

We turned the other way and contemplated on our left the

interminable glass tunnel of the Business Administration Building. "The *longest* building in the world," he commented dryly.

"And what are those?" I asked, pointing to two structures at the far end of the plaza with rippling roofs and rather perfunctory dragons.

"When I brought Frank Lloyd Wright here," O'Gorman replied, "he looked at them and said: 'Disney must have been here.' Then he looked again and added, 'They should have called in an architect as consultant.' "

But as we drove away—University City is as easy to leave as it is hard to enter—O'Gorman's face brightened. "You know, last week I was offered (tentatively) a commission to do a home in the Pedregal myself. Do you know what the lady wanted? A house that would resemble *a volcano in eruption.* Not at all a bad idea! At least more interesting than Mies van der Rohe-on-the-rocks!"

December 26

Called on Roberto Montenegro and Dr. Atl, the two men responsible (along with Fred Davis) for the regeneration of the folk arts in Mexico. Montenegro back in 1919 started the collection of the Museo Nacional de Artes Plasticas. The following year Atl made the first survey of popular arts from border to border and wrote a two-volume treatise on the subject.

Montenegro, whose seventieth birthday is next week, and who is celebrated for having painted (with Xavier Guerrero) the first mural of the renaissance, was elegantly attired in slacks and a black woolen shirt as he received me in his apartment overlooking fashionable Avenida Juárez. He has a small but choice pre-Columbian collection and several fine Chinese screens. The studio seems somehow more a place of social reception than a workshop. Christmas cards were stacked on a shelf, and the artist proudly showed me one from Nelson Rockefeller, as well as a letter from that philanthropist replying to one that Montenegro had sent Rockefeller felicitating him on having failed by some minutes to catch a plane that subsequently crashed.

Montenegro revered the memory of Orozco, he told me, as the one indubitable genius of Mexican art. He himself was hav-

ing a hard time ("Rivera and Tamayo are the only two Mexican artists who make a good living"), being forced to paint portraits. He offered to paint mine, but then, perhaps observing my scuffed shoes and unpressed trousers, added graciously, "—and I'll present it to you in return for the privilege of having you sit for me."

* * *

Montenegro had told me that Dr. Atl (who is a close friend of his) was being attended by a commission of physicians anxious about his health, but I found him in spryer spirits than he had been on my first visit—and much more disparaging. He does not share Montenegro's enthusiasm for Orozco and Tamayo. "Tamayo's murals in the Bellas Artes," he said, "are like all his work, pastiches of what was being done when I was in Paris before the first World War." They could be called the worst murals in Mexico, he added, and the next worst were the Orozcos in Guadalajara. "Only Orozco's early work, in Orizaba and in the National Preparatory School [this was the period when Atl was giving the muralists ideological guidance] is of value. Orozco never did understand how to use color."

Maia and Beebe had joined me, and the latter made some drawings with colored chalk on the floor, including a "portrait" of the bearded patriarch which delighted him. He presented me this time with his monumental study of the eruption of Parícutin, which includes color plates of his paintings of the new volcano in several of its phases; and a small brochure on Popocatépetl. He didn't claim, as some have it, that he had once spent six weeks *inside* the crater of the latter, but said that he had lived that long on the slopes of the volcano when it was still active some forty years ago. I must ask him next time about his talks with Lenin and Mussolini at Lausanne. He promised to take me to see Vasconcelos soon. Much to my surprise he referred to Madero—I had asked him if Madero had supported the revival of the arts in the early days of the Revolution—as an "imbecile." "It is self-evident," he said, "that an imbecile would have no interest in art or progress of any kind."

December 28

I stopped again this morning at Siqueiros's house. He was just back from a reception given by General Cárdenas for the latter's son, whose name (naturally!) is Cuauhtémoc. Siqueiros still hasn't gone to Morelia and now speaks very vaguely of the mural project there. We made a date for next month to visit his new murals at the Hospital La Raza. We talked for a few minutes about various artists, from Jackson Pollock, who had once worked with him, to Rembrandt. I asked him whether he approved of Rembrandt's art.

"He painted for the bourgeoisie. That was his limitation."

But isn't Rembrandt's greatness, I thought, precisely in the fact that he rebelled against the clichés of what had preceded him in his own field, freely, heroically, in terms of a new truth or a new humanity, new values, new forms?

To the degree that Siqueiros *has* achieved greatness in his art, it is because of a similar will to express new values through new forms; and he has achieved this and found places to paint it only because the society in which he functions has been flexible enough ("bourgeois" enough, to use his own terminology) to permit him that liberty.

A society that denies such freedom to the artist cannot, by definition, produce art. Siqueiros is enough of an artist to recognize that Soviet academicism is the opposite of art, but he is not honest enough as a thinker to admit the reason.

Only the artist, or the one who is truly sensitive to art, responds to the essence of art rather than to its sentimental values. Sometimes, but not always, the sentiment and the forms coincide, as in the early days of Mexican painting; and in such times the people can be on the side of the angels, esthetically speaking. But that is only because the people (responding as they always do to sentiment) are accepting willy-nilly the formal values of an art that appeals to everyone. Siqueiros invented new forms, new techniques to say what he felt like saying. Just as Picasso has—and Picasso, for all his *political* orthodoxy, is reviled and suspected by the Communist Party of Russia precisely because he stands, as every true artist must, for individualism and the freedom to operate as an artist. "The point," as Malraux says,

"is not to force an art upon the masses that are indifferent to it. The point is to open up the realms of culture to all those who wish to reach it."

Siqueiros, with obvious pride, pointed out to me a photograph of a painting of his, dated 1938, which showed a city, seen from the air, exploding under a bomb. "Eight years before Hiroshima!" he crowed. "You see the mushroom cloud—the shape of the future?" This seemed to imply that if the picture had been still more "prophetic" and had been entitled "The Atomic Bomb," it would have been an even better picture. Yet it was a poor picture; one felt neither compassion for the victims nor awe and delight over the landscape and the pattern of smoke. It was of the future, perhaps, but not of the present. It was science fiction, not art.

Siqueiros is almost invariably a better painter when he is painting away from politics or public buildings, with no lesson to impart; when his first audience is himself. Then, without conventional criteria—"Am I pleasing the masses?" "Am I doing justice to the future?" "Am I being a a good Party man?"—he is forced to fall back upon the "Yes" or "No" of the voice that really counts in art: the voice of his conscience as an artist.

January 2, 1957

I had dinner with Alma Reed and listened to her talk for several hours on the subject of Orozco, whom she had helped so decisively during his years in the United States. Knowing that I was going to Yucatán in a few days, however, she began by telling me something of her romantic attachment to that part of Mexico. It began after World War I when she was a young reporter from San Francisco. Photographs of her at the time make her look like an unsophisticated Mona Lisa, with touches of Ramona. She is still remarkably handsome.

She had come to Mérida to write some stories for *The New York Times* on the Carnegie Institution's excavations at Chichen-Itzá. There she got into a controversy with the Peabody Museum over the "loot" which old Edward Thompson had dredged from the Sacred Cenote. Thompson had actually "bought" the Maya ruins, and with this in mind the Mexican Supreme Court had later turned down Yucatán's $2,000,000 suit

for the recovery of the jewels. There also Alma had met Felipe Carillo Puerto, the young revolutionary governor of the province. He serenaded her with the now famous song "La Peregrina," followed her all over Mexico, and was eventually assassinated by his political enemies while Alma was in San Francisco buying her trousseau.

Alma has a way of talking—rhapsodizing is more the word—throwing her head back and closing her eyes. "Ah, yes . . . Felipe and I are a legend now. 'La Peregrina' has become the national anthem. . . ." Her apartment, in Calle Elba, is duplex and oriental. Chinese and Indian *objets d'art*, tapestries and brasses, fight for space on the tables and walls with Orozco drawings and mementos of her Yucatecan lover. I noticed autographed photos of Tagore, Einstein, Mr. and Mrs. Sikelianos, and Kahlil Gibran. There was also a framed manuscript of a sentence in pencil by Orozco:

THE COMMON IDEAL

Back to the good craft and perfect technique that makes the work precious and imperishable and apt to be inherited by the next generation.

Next to this exercise in English was a photograph of the artist's hand. "His precious hand . . ." Alma sighed.

We looked through her clipping book for a photograph of Felipe Carillo Puerto. "Do you keep clippings?" she asked. I said I didn't. She sighed again. "I have to. So many of them are historic."

I asked her to tell me more about her Yucatán experience.

"Felipe was martyred," she said, "for enforcing the Constitution of 1917. The other state governors after the Revolution either didn't care to or didn't want to take the risk. He did it gently, because he was a gentle person, who loved people. *That*, they couldn't forgive. He even translated it into the Maya tongue. He was also the only governor to give women the vote —something that had never been done before in Latin America. He also established the State University of Yucatán. He believed in education above everything, but he knew that when you

take away superstitions you have to substitute something in their place. His substitute was beauty: fiestas, dancing, music, theater, poetry, and art. He was opposed to the Church, but again he created substitutes. I went to a baptism ceremony with him once. There was music and he gave a speech; then he asked each mother to bring her baby to the font, and as he touched its head with a flower, he asked the mother to make a wish. Like Gandhi, he knew the value of symbols!"

When her fiancé had been shot, in 1924, Alma had returned to Yucatán to try to comfort his family.

"That mother! What a wonderful woman she was," Alma said. "She was tiny. But it was said that when her husband, Felipe's father, was Mayor of Motul, she used to go out and remove with her bare hands the bombs his enemies would plant in the yard. When I returned to Yucatán, the first thing she did was to take me aside and say: 'Almita, we must go to the Registro Civil at once!' I asked why. 'Because they are about to burn it down!' 'Burn it down?' 'Of course. The papers proving that Felipe divorced his wife, who has been living in Cuba for three years with their children, are in that building. Dora [Felipe's daughter] has married a good-for-nothing, and they all want to pretend now that they were a happy family, and get the pensions.' "

The papers were taken out and Alma motored to Progreso with Felipe's mother, where the document was photostated and notorized before the American Consul. "But the divorced widow got her 1,500 *pesos* a year, and still gets it," Alma added, "and the good-for-nothing son-in-law became Governor of Yucatán himself and was in office long enough to undo most of Felipe's work."

"What did Felipe plan to do next," I asked, "had he lived?"

"He could have become president, but he never would have," she replied. "We had already planned to spend our honeymoon in Switzerland. There, though he was forty-six, Felipe hoped to spend several years with me, educating himself for the great role he wanted to play in the international regeneration of the backward races of the world."

It sounded like a pretty dull honeymoon, but looking at the photographs of the man and of Alma as a girl, I felt reasonably

sure that they must have talked of livelier ways of spending their time.

Alma has little use for Cárdenas because, "unlike Felipe, a true socialist, Cárdenas tried to force socialization on the sisal *fincas*, with disastrous results." The real hero of Mexican politics before Felipe, she believes, was Flores Magón. "Clemente [Orozco] understood Felipe best when he placed him, along with Gandhi and Lenin, in his New York mural as the prophet of the future." She went on to say that the ideology as well as the financial backing for the other American murals Orozco painted was in considerable part hers. "I was a woman of independent wealth when I came to Mexico," she said. "Where is it now? All gone. I don't regret the cause, but now I have to support myself by journalism."

Orozco, in Alma Reed's adoring eyes, could do no wrong. "He had compassion and humanity above all other painters, as well as genius. He was a great mathematician, a great engineer, a great architect. He was a kind, always thoughtful family man," though his wife Marguerita, I gathered, was hardly equipped to understand him, and his children, as is usually the case with genius, turned out to be undistinguished.

January 4

Don Demarest took me to have breakfast with Fred Davis, who grows his own coffee at Cuernavaca in a home that is said to be the first and still the finest of the rehabilitated palaces to which the wealthy of Mexico now repair for cool and quiet.

Davis it was who established the appreciation and market for Mexico's folk arts, and his collection (quantitatively, at any rate) is the greatest in the world.

The two-story house on Calle Rio Amazonas is built around two patios and every one of the huge rooms is crammed from floor to ceiling with early Mexican renaissance paintings and etchings, pre-Columbian seals, *retablos*, Metepec and Matamoros ceramics, inlaid lacquer trays from Michoacán, Aztec clay pipes, bead pictures, Viceregal embroidered garters, minuscule figurines, Colonial primitives, *serapes*, *rebozos*, *petates*, and *metates* —each the finest and most extensive collection of its kind. The federal government, which is planning to build a Folklore

Museum, has put in a bid for a part of the collection but can't as yet find the money to pay for it.

Davis, who was actually the first private patron of the fine arts as well as of the folk arts in Mexico, came here as a boy in the time of Porfirio Díaz, with a young friend whose father then owned many of the railroads. The story of how he started a curio shop, branched out to encourage Indian craftsmanship in places where it had all but vanished, and put René d'Harnoncourt (now head of New York's Museum of Modern Art) in business, is told by Erna Fergusson in her *Mexico Revisited.* I asked Davis, in wonderment over such a wealth of treasures, whether in the days before he retired he had held out the best pieces from his customers.

He smiled—his bald head, darting blue eyes, and red sideburns giving him a little the look of a benign orangutan:

"Let's say that the things I thought no one would like quite as well as I would, I kept."

And then, with a generosity rare in collectors, he offered us our choice of a tableful of Jalisco seals and the pick of a dozen ex-votos that had just come back from a European show.

I was struck by the degree to which most of the Mexican painters have lost their touch since the twenties, when Davis collected them. Several small oils by Rivera and Tamayo were gems. A drawing by Siqueiros of three miners administering to a fallen comrade was as fine as any expressive drawing I've ever seen. Atl's early landscapes were filled with an atmosphere of mystery. The dozen Orozco lithographs were, of course, incomparable. The house itself is strangely Victorian, with its Whistler etchings stepped up the stairwell, its Arabian carpets and its heavy English furniture. Davis himself is like the ghost of a vanished era, but a thoroughly civilized and charming ghost.

January 6

Ever since seeing Prieto's house in the Pedregal, I've had a sneaking suspicion that Luis Barragán offers a more sensible point of departure from the International Style than Juan O'Gorman—and an equally "Mexican" one. Of course, it's Spanish-Mexican, but is that any less valid than Indian?

This afternoon I visited Barragán at his home, which doubles

as office. The visit was arranged by Mathias Goeritz, his colleague in a current project to build a new approach to Mexico City from the north.

Goeritz is one of those world-culture Germans who used to be so familiar in the days of the Weimar Republic and are now beginning to be encountered again. They have contagious senses of humor and adapt themselves perfectly to any sophisticated society. D'Harnoncourt and Rudolf von Ripper, though Austrian barons, are examples, and, like them, Goeritz is tall, loose-jointed, gallant, relaxed, sensitive but extraverted. He is a sculptor who was running some sort of a school in Altamira in Spain after the war when asked to come to Mexico to lecture. "So, knowing nothing whatever about architecture," he says, "I became an architect!"

Here is the fantastic story of how he became one. One day he had received a phone call from a man named Daniel Mont. Mont was a gentleman of leisure with imagination, the sort of hypnotic daydreamer with no particular objectives whom one finds in Mexico. He didn't know that Goeritz had been a Bauhaus man, admirer of Paul Klee, and art-historian Ph.D. from Danzig. He only knew that Goeritz made "emotional" sculpture and that he would like to see an "emotional" building on a certain corner that he had noticed was for sale. "I want you to start building there tomorrow," he had told the astonished Goeritz.

"Build what?"

"I don't know, or care. Anything you like. Three engineers and forty workers will be there in the morning. You tell them what to do."

Goeritz had asked Mont if he owned the lot. "No," replied Mont (whom Goeritz describes as "a man of great warmth and tenderness, though he looked rather like King Kong because his father, who had wanted a tall son, used to hang him up by the arms as a boy"). "I don't own the lot," Mont had continued, "but I know a man who will buy it and not have to be paid for several years, and another man who will underwrite the construction costs."

Baffled but intrigued, Goeritz had gone to the lot next morning and, sure enough, there were the workmen. "I fell in with

Mont's mood quite readily," Goeritz says, "telling them to build a wall here, a wall there, and when the walls weren't high enough, to tear them down and start over again with a broader base. I was having fun already and was excited, inspired. I knew absolutely nothing about architecture but I made a rough sketch." (He showed it to me and it looked more like a Paul Klee than a floor plan.) "No two walls were the same height, and none of them was parallel to another, or at right angles to the floor or ceiling. I made a 'construction' of wood in the patio, and what looks like handwriting in Arabic on one wall—though, naturally, being a sculptor, I didn't use words, so it can't be read. As the building grew, I decided what its use would be. It would be a museum of modern art for Mexico, but one in which the spectators would pay (what they could afford) to see the artists *working*. The big wall would be for Tamayo, Mexico's outstanding nonpolitical painter; but unfortunately Tamayo wanted 70,000 *pesos* and Mont wasn't able to raise more than 5,000, which just covered the preliminary lines of his 'golden section.'

"Franz Kline wanted to come from New York, but couldn't. Henry Moore in London fortunately could, and did—for no more than his round-trip ticket. You'll see all this when you visit the El Eco Nightclub which my museum has since become—but that's getting ahead of the story. Carlos Merida undertook a second mural. We invited 200 people to the opening and 2,000 came. Later Siqueiros and Rivera launched their press attack on 'dangerous foreign influences' and we were off! There was even printed a photostat of a purported attack on me in letter form by Orozco, which I checkmated by photostating my passport proving I had arrived in Mexico two weeks *after* that great artist's death! They called me an ex-Nazi, a McCarthyite—and of course a homosexual. But death put an end to the museum, for just as the building was being acclaimed in Spain, France, Germany, and the United States, Mont died of a heart attack. My enthusiasm, if it didn't die with him, at least abated. And then one day I came to the building, found it closed, with all the doors padlocked, and was told that the owner of the lot had taken it over and converted it into a nightclub."

Barragán entered at this point. He is tall, even taller than Goeritz, thin, with a long bronzed face and a bald dome of a

head, his handsome dark eyes under slightly raised eyebrows cased in heavy black-shell glasses. He was superbly dressed in charcoal grays with a shell-pink shirt, gray socks, and well-polished black sport shoes. He was born in Guadalajara, and it had been there, he said, that he had learned to love a society that was reserved, respecting privacy and boasting an architecture of walled enclosures that reflected it. "My name is actually Arabian," he said, "—through the Moors, of course."

Goeritz continued with what he had been saying about El Eco. "I was trying, as we both do, I think, to express an emotion. That is the point at which our architecture—whether there, or in this house, or in the pylons we are now designing for the bankers of the Satellite City—is the absolute antithesis of the International Style. When you go into a Gothic cathedral you don't ask, 'Where is the *excusado*, the W.C.?' or 'Where is the kitchen?' or 'Does it have good cross-ventilation?' You draw in your breath with an 'Ahh—!' You're captured, part of a spiritual experience, *nicht wahr?*"

But how, I couldn't help wondering, do you people do so well? Building houses like this one with walls four feet thick, ceilings fifteen feet high, rugs into which one's soles disappear, and tables of solid, unvarnished mahogany? I had also seen Barragán drive up in a new Cadillac, and his art library in the shelves that surrounded us was staggering. I asked.

"I have no architectural degree," Barragán replied. "I have made my fortune in real-estate developments—like the Pedregal Gardens. In this way, I have been able to build only what I believed in and have had complete freedom to execute. *I am my own client.* With the Gropius-influenced architecture of the University I have no sympathy. It was a revolutionary architecture in the twenties when Le Corbusier was talking about 'machines for living'—the same Le Corbusier who has now graduated to making such *emotional* things as the Ronchamps Chapel."

Barragán was getting really worked up now. He sat on the edge of his chair.

"Why should architecture be only for use? Why not for pleasure? Why should glass dominate buildings? Why should doors be two meters, sixty centimeters high?" He looked around

the room. "My spirit *needs* this height. I want to be at peace when I come in out of the traffic of Juárez and Madero! The complete human being is not just physical. You notice how small a proportion of this room is devoted to that single 10′ x 10′ window? Yet even *that* must be covered with a curtain all day long! The architectural magazines have been a bad influence. Modern architecture looks fine in photographs—but can you *live* in it? A landscape has less value when seen through a plate of glass; through familiarity, by your own constant presence, you reduce its value. I enjoyed Michelangelo's dome most when I saw it, once, through a keyhole. So why open a whole wall to bring a garden into a house? The sense of mystery is important for life, for everyday living, just as it is for love. The sense of discovery, of adventure, promotes life. Only primitives, or very cultivated people, are concerned with beauty. The masses, with their middle-class minds, don't want beauty; they want comfort, security, order, likeness. But all religions make their propaganda through beauty. Architecture today reflects the loss of privacy in modern life. In public, the opportunity to think and to reflect is lost. Houses have become *clubs* where people are no longer alone. The good architect must counter all this."

January 8

When I came up the stairs leading to Rivera's studio this afternoon, the sound of Diego's voice dictating to a secretary was like that of a priest intoning the Mass. One didn't need a word of Spanish to get the gist of the article or speech: "*La generalidad de los intelectuales . . . el triunfo de la razón . . . rota de fascismo en Rockefeller Center . . . la fraternización de los Negros y Blancos . . . Bomba Atómica y Bomba Hache por Eisenhower . . . las reacciónes de los obreros Americanos . . .*"

There were visual parallels to this Black Mass. The painter's subject, a society woman in a bridal dress, with a massive gold chain around her neck, heavily penciled eyebrows, and heavily carmined lips, her hands demurely clasped in her lap, was a sort of parody of the Virgin. The Judas figures swaying from the ceiling in the breeze, their bones rattling like dry leaves, could have been the souls of the damned.

"*Industrial workers of the world . . . for the present tem-*

porary interim of capitalism . . . Orozco, Siqueiros, and I . . . the mural painting of real social significance . . . the October Revolution . . ."

Diego was dictating as he painted, standing in his rubber-soled shoes and blue dungaree jacket, his lower lip thrust forward dogmatically, his expressionless eyes bulging, the cheeks always pouched in a faint smile. Slowly but unerringly the brush was catching that perfectly vacant face and adding its mask to the two masks (her daughters?) already completed on either side. The big canvas already had its background of potted palms. Academic? Did the subject deserve anything better? They were getting what they wanted—and were paying for.

I asked Diego before leaving whether he was familiar with Mathias Goeritz's work.

"You know he was an officer in the Nazi army?" he asked.

"He told me he was a refugee from Nazism," I replied, "and partly Jewish."

"Very clever," Diego said, with his sly giggle, "*very clever!*"

January 9

Siqueiros drove me out to the Hospital on the edge of town to see his latest work. We looked at Rivera's fresco in the main lobby first. It is a compartmented documentary of the history of medicine in Mexico. "I make Diego mad," Siqueiros said, "by saying to him, 'Well, Diego, when are we going to start making *murals?*' You can see for yourself that the detail here is often excellent, but look at the fresco as a whole. Why fresco? Does it have any relation to the architecture? Does it *do* anything?"

Siqueiros's own mural in the lobby of the hospital theater "does something," all right—something rather unpleasant but undeniably eye catching. It makes the walls and ceilings swirl, pulsate and jump at you.

The artist walked up and down expounding theory. Easel painting was dead, he asserted—"and the flat, two-dimensional, primitivistic phase of easel painting which we call modernism is the deadest part of the whole corpse." Depth perspective, volume, and movement were what painting by its very nature accomplishes best. "Sacrifice that magic illusion and what have you got?" Today, he went on, we were at the very beginning

of a great movement of public, communicative art, an art that can and must be integrated with architecture and the other arts. "For 400 years we've been using the same mediums, the same old brushes! Shall the scientist alone invent, and explore the future?"

He looked up at the ceiling. "You see that purple wedge? I use purple there only because the *depth* must be increased at that point. The Tamayos paint with a preconceived notion of how to use color for purely 'esthetic' effects."

On the way back he said that he had returned from Russia by way of Venice in order to see the Bienale. "Ben Nicholson's prize-winning picture was a pitiful achievement. Tasteful, neatly organized forms; what more can one say? In the salons of the various Western countries represented, I said to myself: 'Change the name of the country over each door and who would know the difference? Their pictures all look alike!' " In Paris he had had talks with Picasso. "I have written a dialogue between Picasso and Rembrandt," he said. "Rembrandt looks at the 'Guernica' and says, 'Excellent sketch! When do you start the painting?' Picasso, like all the French, is doing no more than present the bourgeoisie with tidy trifles, bits of his complicated psyche."

Back in his studio he made me a drawing of the poet Hart Crane, with whom I had corresponded and whom he had known at Taxco in 1929, when exiled there by Calles. George Gershwin and Eisenstein and Spratling and Katherine Anne Porter had completed that brilliant company. He looked at some of my photographs. "Calder is a truly great innovator, but he makes toys." A more recent shot, of Herón Martinez, the folk artist, making a candelabra at Acatlán, intrigued him. "Four hundred years ago," he said, "this man of talent would have made *pyramids*."

7 IN PURSUIT OF THE MAYA

Flight to Mérida—Ruz Llullier Says No—First Stage: Chichen-Itzá—Digression on the Ancient Maya—Second State: Uxmal—Contretemps with Montenegro—Breakfast in Campeche—A Museum of Sorts—Train Ride into Tabasco—Bypassing the Jungle—Third Stage: Yaxchilán—Bonampak: the Unobtainable

January 10, Mexico

Demarest and I are flying to Yucatán tomorrow, by way of Veracruz, Campeche, and Tabasco. There is as yet no good land route to the peninsula of the Mayas. We would not have been able to afford the trip but for the fortunate circumstance that the director of the Mexican Airlines was indebted to the Minister of Tourism for a recent favor. We applied to the latter, Señor Garcia Villagrán, for two round-trip tickets on the grounds that we both intended to write about Yucatán and that what we wrote might conceivably stimulate tourist interest in the Maya-Toltec ruins there. This was several months ago and we finally got the tickets last week—only because of the "favor"; the Airlines' director was as gracious as the Minister but he begged us to emphasize that our complimentary two-way passage was an unprecedented concession. We have ten days to see what we can of a great civilization that still guards its secrets tenaciously.

Demarest should be an ideal traveling companion. He knows Spanish perfectly and has a love for the Mexicans that is not shared by most of our compatriots. In addition to having compiled (with Coley Taylor) a "biography" of the Virgin of Guadalupe, he is now working on a study of Mexican folklore to be called, felicitously, *The Candy Skull*. He has a sense of

humor and a curiosity to explore out-of-the-way places almost as insatiable as my own.

January 11, Mérida

As our plane circled Anáhuac (the valley of Mexico) before heading for Veracruz, we passed over Amecameca and Don remarked that this was the village where Fray Martín de Valencia, one of the twelve hardy Franciscans who marched through the pass with the Conquerors in 1521, whipped Cortés publicly to demonstrate to the Indians that the Spaniards' sins against them were not condoned by the Church. The good Father, perhaps despairing of reconciling Conquest with Christianity, became a hermit and died here much later.

Since we had no visibility over Campeche or Tabasco, I passed the time reading Malraux's *The Royal Way* and wishing I had been an archeologist, a way of life that so happily unites contemplation and action. Acting upon our thoughts, the first thing we did after landing at Mérida was to seek out Alberto Ruz Llullier, the discoverer of Palenque's hidden tomb, who was reputed to be in the Yucatán capital. We found him in an office at the archeological headquarters, poring over maps with an assistant, Hypolito Sánchez Vera. The latter turned out to have been a collaborator of Giles Greville Healey, the American explorer-photographer, in the period immediately following Healey's sensational discovery of the great Maya frescoes at Bonampak in 1946. This was doubly a stroke of luck because one of our aims is to penetrate the Chiapas jungle on our way back, if not to Bonampak at least to Yaxchilán, the almost equally inaccessible Maya citadel not far from it. Yaxchilán is situated in a bend of the Usumacinta River that forms the border between Guatemala and Mexico.

Ruz threw up his hands when we told him we contemplated a trip to Yaxchilán in the two days our schedule permitted. He himself had never been able to get there and was awaiting a government expedition, complete with plane, guides, mules, and camping equipment. "Impossible!" he exclaimed. "A trip like that requires months of planning." Sánchez Vera, more familiar with the madness of Americans, at least humored us by drawing at our request a map of the area and suggesting that we wire

Paco Villanueva, an exporter of chicle who lives at Tenosique in Tabasco and might fly us into a mahogany clearing in the jungle from which dugout canoes could be procured. Frans Blom had already recommended Villanueva to me. We thanked the two archeologists and lost no time sending the wire.

In the afternoon, after a swim in the hotel pool, Don and I saw something of Mérida by the satisfactorily slow (but not inexpensive) medium of a horse-drawn carriage. The tiny horses are supposed to be descendants of those which Cortés and Alvarado brought with them from Spain, but their ancestors must have been a lot larger to have frightened the natives so badly. Our "hay burner," as Don called him, took us to Ruz's house in the suburbs along perfectly straight streets bordered by pink-flowering "begonia" trees. Almost every house—the most attractive are built of white limestone chips imbedded in gray mortar—is equipped with a Texas-type windmill to tap the shallow wells (*cenotes*). An abundance of these wells makes possible Mérida's 300,000 population; for Yucatán, being entirely without rivers, is an arid limestone tableland.

Some of the houses sport names. One pastel-tinted mansion was called "Carta Clara," the name of the salty local Yucatecan beer, and next to it was a broken-down shack labeled "Pepsi-Cola." But this is only in the suburbs. The town houses are elegant and spotlessly clean—that characteristic in which Yucatecans take so vocal a pride. I was reminded of a conversation a friend of mine, Betty Schermerhorn, had had with a young student last year. It had taken place during the student riots in Mérida which brought out the hated federal troops. He had complained to her of having to serve in the Mexican army. "They hate *us* too," he had told her, "so they assign us to coastal areas or along rivers because they know we come from a riverless land and can't swim. Many of us drown, and many more die of their dysentery and other diseases because we have no resistance, never having lived in the filth that they are accustomed to."

We continued our leisurely drive. The streets, laid out in a grid on the flat terrain, are identified unromantically by numbers. But, passing the Parque Felipe Carillo Puerto, we courted romance by hastening to the first music shop we could find and

buying a record of "La Peregrina." The girl who sold it to us said she had seen Alma Reed at a reception here two years ago, in tears when the band recognized her and struck up the song.

Our carriage rolled into the center of town over the hot macadam into which bottle caps have sunk to make a mosaic of sorts, and pulled up across from Montejo's palace with its frieze of cavaliers standing on Indians' heads. Though Bernal Díaz calls him "a better businessman than a soldier," Montejo became the first governor of Yucatán; evidently Carillo Puerto's antithesis, he is regarded as the true ancestor of the rich henequen (sisal) *hacendados* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is hard to imagine, though, what wealth there could have been in Yucatán before sisal—which requires almost no water—became a thriving industry. Logwood for indigo, perhaps? In any event, not tourism.

What the tourists now flock to Yucatán to see, we'll begin to investigate tomorrow. But we will not look for help from Barbachano, the *patrón* who has cornered the market in Maya ruins. We've signed up for a day in Chichen-Itzá at $8 each, including lunch and guide. Barbachano's virtual monopoly charges considerably more.

In a shop that deals in pre-Columbian antiquities we ran into Roberto Montenegro, accompanied by two young French archeologists. I bought two Maya figurines from the island of Jaina, the painter being kind enough to endorse my check. I was amused that they asked *my* opinion regarding the authenticity of a Maya bowl they were thinking of buying. Montenegro declined politely our invitation to accompany us to Chichen-Itzá tomorrow. "It's bastard Toltec," he said a little scornfully.

January 12, Chichen-Itzá

Bastard Toltec or not (and I'll come to that later) the ruins we visited today are not to be missed—or dismissed. If only for their extent, variety, and remarkable state of preservation, they are surely the most impressive on the North American continent, and in these respects comparable to such other well-preserved sites of world fame as Machu Pichu, the Roman Forum, Karnak, and Angkor Wat.

On our way out, driving through gently rolling fields of

scrub divided by stone walls, I thought of Martha's Vineyard. Then, when this landscape gave way to sisal fields dotted with native thatched huts of adobe painted white or burnt umber, I was reminded even more poignantly of Haiti. The Indians are almost as poor as the Haitians, but not quite. The women, with their typically Maya high cheekbones, receding foreheads, and almost Oriental eyes, have a token luxury to match the inherited aristocracy of their features. It is an ankle-length white *huipil* embroidered with red blossoms.

A guide, apparently by prearrangement with our driver, seized us the moment we alighted. The word "Maya," he told us, means either "not many"—i.e., "The Chosen People"—or "not much" (water). Here, there are apparently only two subterranean wells. One of them is the Sacred Cenote that lost its "roof" centuries ago and became the place where virgins were first drugged and then thrown in by the priests. Our guide pointed out that this drowning ceremony was proof of the superior civilization of the Maya in the time before the Toltecs came down from Tula in the north, introducing blood sacrifice. Occasionally, he said, the virgins did manage to revive and swim, and if they managed to swim all day in the forty-foot-deep pool sixty feet below, they were pulled out "and became heroines," almost goddesses. "Anyway," he added, "those that didn't survive believed they were being thrown to paradise."

Another way of becoming a hero among these people, apparently, was to score a goal in *pelota*. We visited the court, an immense enclosure as long as two football fields placed end to end, and when I saw the goals I could believe it. Almost forty feet above the field, they stuck out at right angles to the side walls like doughnuts. Through these circular openings no more than a foot in diameter, the contestants tried to propel a ball by motions of their elbows and hips, to which pieces of leather were attached. (The fact that the ball is known to have been made of rubber is cited as one proof that the Maya were deeply indebted to their more ancient Gulf Coast cousins.) Judging by one of the nearby reliefs, losers, instead of being traded or returned to the minor leagues, were executed.

We had paid off our guide by this time and managed to spend the rest of the day in a more leisurely inspection of the ruins. As

nearly as I can make out from what has been written on the subject (almost all of it now unreliable) and from my talks with Covarrubias, Montenegro, Ruz, and others, the early history of Yucatán is as follows. The Maya drifted into the waterless peninsula from their great cultural centers in Chiapas, Guatemala, Belize, and Honduras, some time after the catastrophe that brought their classic period to a close. This catastrophe, whatever its cause—religious, military or economic (the last, infertility resulting from constant "burning off" of the corn lands, is most frequently cited)—took place in the year 10.0.0.0.0, correlated by one group of savants as A.D. 830. Settling here in Uxmal and on other nearby sites, they prospered for a time and evolved the architectural-sculptural style known as Puuc. The rectangular palaces of Uxmal decorated with stone mosaics of the rain god Chac mark the culmination of this Maya culture, but it survives also in the early architecture of Chichen—Montenegro notwithstanding! Then came the Itzá, sweeping up from the Gulf Coast near the mouth of the Usumacinta River. According to the *Chronicle of Chilam Balam,* a narrative of surviving legend taken down by the early priests in Yucatán, they were led by a high priest named Kukulkán. Kukulkán, whose name also appears in *Popol Vuh,* a compilation of Quiché-Maya legends preserved by the early priests in Guatemala, is sometimes identified with our old friend Quetzalcoatl, "culture hero" of the Toltecs from Tula. All this occurred toward the end of the ninth century and, though it resulted in the introduction of some Toltec ideas, didn't basically alter the Maya style of Chichen-Itzá. To conclude, the Itzá flourished under the so-called League of Mayapán until driven out of Chichen around the year 1000. Mayapán, the Toltec capital, was destroyed in 1461, but Maya culture survived spottilly in Yucatán even after the Conquest, the last hold-outs being defeated as late as 1697 at Lake Petén in Guatemala, whither they had fled.

Chichen-Itzá was known to the early Spanish priests but ignored by them once Maya religious and cultural activities had been stamped out. The site was rediscovered by John L. Stephens, the American traveler-explorer, in 1841, on the same safari which led him to Palenque. Early archeologists then visited it. But in 1900 Edward Thompson, American Consul

General in Yucatán, bought the hacienda on which the ruins stood and, employing a diver and a dredge, extracted from the Sacred Cenote a wealth of jewelry, gold and copper plaques, bone and jade ornaments, many originating from as far away as South America and the Valley of Mexico. He sold them to Harvard's Peabody Museum. This was the discovery that Alma Reed had told me about. The site itself was recovered by the Mexican Government and was systematically explored (and restored) from 1923 on.

While Don Demarest, to satisfy his thirst for religious symbolism, concentrated on the "Temple of Jaguars," the "Wall of Skulls," and other Toltec buildings adorned with reliefs depicting the exploits of the Plumed Serpent, I, with six rolls of film to squander, succumbed to such photographer's dreams as the "Temple of Warriors," surrounded by its forest of free-standing columns; two fabulous gargoyles that refused to "pose" against an elusive cloud; and a small temple of the Maya period called "The Church" that is literally top-heavy with bristling stone masks of the rain god. Crowded between these extroverts, a turtle, an armadillo, a snail, and a crab "support the sky"—presumably not too well to prevent the rain from falling.

We ascended "El Castillo" together. This shapeliest and best-preserved of pre-Columbian pyramids has many unique features. Its temple atop is well preserved; in fact, it served as a fort during some of the campaigns the Spaniards were obliged to wage against the recalcitrant Maya. Inside the outer pyramid with its 365 steps (counting the platform), archeologists found a smaller pyramid whose temple contained a recumbent rain god (Chacmool) and a limestone throne carved in the shape of a jaguar, painted bright red, with eyes and spots of green jade. Both are to be seen in their original positions and both struck us as more comic than awesome. But perhaps we were beginning to tire.

Don insisted that I inspect his Quetzalcoatl frieze across the plaza. One of these describes the genesis of the race. The tears of the god turn into, first, flowers, then snails, then turtles, then birds; finally into Man. But Man's offering to the god turns into a snake, which in turn devours Man, whose final symbol is the skull—resembling the dragon face of the original god. Or so I

interpreted it for Don. "Wrong from start to finish," he said. I had a single exposure left on my sixth roll and snapped the skull frieze. We had strength for one more ruin and staggered to the "Caracol."

This observatory takes its name (snail) from a spiral staircase inside. Don, indefatigable amid ruins, climbed it. I walked around it, regretting that my film was gone and being reminded by its magnificent silhouette of the dome of Theodoric's Tomb at Ravenna. More knowledgeable explorers at Chichen-Itzá have been reminded of the Orient. There are lotus designs that could have originated in southern India. For that matter, a tiny Maya head I picked up yesterday in Mérida could be pure Cambodian. Face scarification and nasal distortion, as once practiced here, are common in the South Pacific. A two-way trans-Pacific trade in ancient times is almost as well established a hypothesis among ethnologists as the Mongol origin of the Indian race.

It was on one of these regal platforms that my old friend Carleton Beals had a talk with Felipe Carillo Puerto in the early twenties. The latter had spent seven years in Porfirio Díaz's prisons and had emerged during the 1910 revolution to liberate the Indians from their virtual slavery to the sisal planters. Standing here, he said: "We must restore these old monuments that my people may have pride in their race and build again as they builded of old." Then the revolutionist had added: "We have used force. Now we must use love. In the name of Jesus you have been betrayed. In the name of the old gods I declare you free!"

Brave words . . . But the Sacred Cenote of Chichen has given way to the neon-lighted one at Los Tulipanes in Mérida, where we repaired to dine.

Before leaving Chichen, however, we had a bite in a more humble restaurant on the way out of the ruins. Entering, we were startled by the crowing of a cock. It was tethered in the cashier's booth and next to it, asleep in the cash box, was a hen. In a corner stood a small statuette of a bleeding Christ, with a lighted votive candle in front of it. No cashier. Nearby is a small church, constructed partly of stone, with bits of Maya relief sculpture still visible here and there. One of these is embedded in the pavement one must walk over to enter. We stepped over it

with mixed feelings. An Indian was pumping a small hand organ for the kneeling worshipers. Suddenly he broke into song—though the sound was more like the cawing of a startled turkey. A sign over the contribution box assured the prospective donor that 10 *pesos* would provide a Mass; 100, fireworks; and 300, a brass band.

As for Los Tulipanes, its conical thatch roof on the street level reminded me once again of Haiti—of a certain nightclub's studied attempt to give the tourist a bit of "old" Africa. There are some remarkably bad murals in Los Tulipanes. One of them showed a white woman with long black tresses sadly drawing water. She resembled, oddly enough, Alma Reed.

January 13, Uxmal

By the time Alvarado, Cortés's flamboyant lieutenant, arrived in Yucatán, the Mayas had long since abandoned this site as well as Chichen to the north. Alvarado found them flourishing, however, in Guatemala. "There," he reported laconically to his chief, "I burned their kings and ordered their cities razed because they were so dangerous and strong that it seemed more like a house of thieves than of people." Thanks to the more humane and culture-minded priests who followed Alvarado, *Popol Vuh* was preserved. I read it the night before we visited Uxmal, and its account of the Creation sounds in so many respects like the Hebrew *Genesis* as to suggest a common origin:

> Let the waters recede and make a void. . . . Let there be light. . . . Like the mist, like a cloud, and like a cloud of dust was the creation when the mountains appeared from the water. Thus was the earth created when the sky was in suspense. . . .

But the gods were angry when the first man couldn't talk:

> "We have changed our minds," they said, "because it has not been possible for you to adore us or invoke us. . . . Accept your destiny: your flesh shall be torn to pieces."

A deluge accounted for these ungrateful children. But the animals were preserved, it seems, and those who had somehow survived the wrath of the gods became the monkeys—"who look like men, but are an example of a generation created, but only out of wood."

After this evolutionary step, *Popol Vuh* relates many more Biblical stories—or seems to. There is the man who was thrown into a pit but escaped by guile to slay his 400 oppressors who became the stars—Joseph? There is the Tree whose forbidden fruit tempted the maiden, Xquic: a skull, rather than a serpent, among the branches urged her to pluck, and when she did she conceived (though still a virgin) and was for a time in disgrace. "I have no child," says the pregnant Xquic, "O my father, because I have not yet known a youth." They want to sacrifice her but she convinces them that what happened was holy, "*nor must you let them force you to kill men.*" And as a sign "the tree gave forth sap similar to blood" (transubstantiation?) "and was called the Red Tree of Cochineal."

Finally there came a race of men whose wives were made "during sleep." This race did not invoke images of wood or stone. It was poor. It possessed nothing. "But it had the nature of extraordinary men." But unfortunately the times were not propitious for peace. The great migration from Tula took place, led by a blond, eyeless giant, and as he came (like Moses at the Red Sea) "the waters parted."

This was Quetzalcoatl—but remember! the Maya version: Quetzalcoatl the foreigner; not the beneficent abhorrer of human sacrifice that Moctezuma feared. Coming out of the barbarous north, he brought with him Fire—and the Fire kept going out. Quetzalcoatl, who had become a god by this time, adopted the same attitudes of jealousy and suspicion as his predecessors. In the cold darkness the poor Mayas asked him whether he would accept money. No, he replied, money didn't interest him, but blood did. So the cycle of sacrifices and wars began; the Mayas exterminated one another. Late, but too late, they got wise to Quetzalcoatl and turned him into stone once and for all. But by that time the bloodthirsty Aztecs had moved in on them, and behind them the Spaniards with their fire sticks, putting an end to the Quiché-Maya dream of peace, corn and glory.

* * *

The ruins of Uxmal rise out of the plain dramatically after one crosses a range of very low foothills fifty miles southwest of Mérida. Unlike Chichen-Itzá, Uxmal is without water and

its inhabitants had to rely entirely on catchments and cisterns. It is hardly surprising that Chac, the rain god, supplies almost all the decorative motives here. The dryness is forbidding, even today. Some vultures were working over a skunk as we drove in. In the rubble—and at Uxmal rubble predominates over ruins—iguanas stared at us dubiously. Pale green, crested with gold and jet, and looking as prehistoric as any of the fallen *stellae,* they quickly withdrew into their dens. And in the V-shaped burial chambers, whose green, dripping walls are streaked with black and yellow, bats could be heard squeaking in the crevices of the broken combs and merlons.

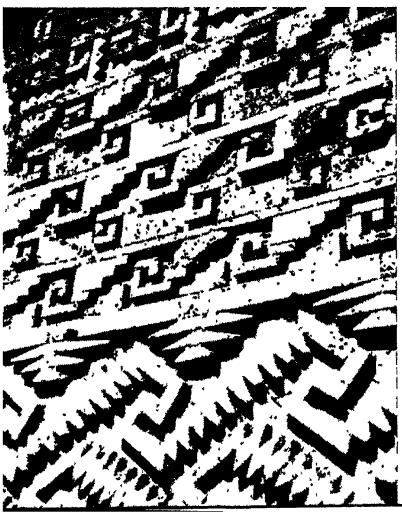
Uxmal may be closer to "classic Maya" as they say, but it doesn't compare with Chichen in either variety or detail. Some of the flat-topped palaces have been likened to the Greek temples for their simplicity but such comparisons are misleading; structures like "The Church" or the "Caracol" at Chichen need not be compared with anything. The beauty of Uxmal is in ruin itself. It lacks finished sculpture of any quality, all the good pieces having been carted away by the hated Mexicanos to the Archaeological Museum in the capital. The casual disarray of centuries of neglect, the action of wind and sun, and of gravity, have produced a fine conglomeration which, happily, Stephens, Frans Blom, and Sylvanus Morley, Uxmal's chief explorers, did nothing to restore. Only now are the bureaucrats beginning to move in and make their neat card indexes of scattered stone. Meanwhile, adventurous tourists climb the almost perpendicular steps of the "Pyramid of the Magician," hanging precariously to a rusty chain as the footing splays out from under their feet; or pose against the orange and black striations of the "Palace of the Governor," the triangular shadow of whose opening, punctured by a single brutal column, frowns upon them with an almost sexual emphasis.

January 14, Campeche

Great goings-on with Montenegro before quitting Mérida this morning. It began when Paco Villanueva, Frans Blom's guide at Tenosique, wired back regarding our trip to Yaxchilán. His answer was affirmative but the price was very high. Between us we had a total of 1,500 *pesos* ($120) which was 400 *pesos*

Street scene, Oaxaca

Mitla of the Mixtecs Abstraction and Death



(*above*) Howard Leigh's Zapotec "A face of anguished beauty . . ."
(*right*) Chamula madonna "A face out of time . . ."

San Cristobal de las Casas

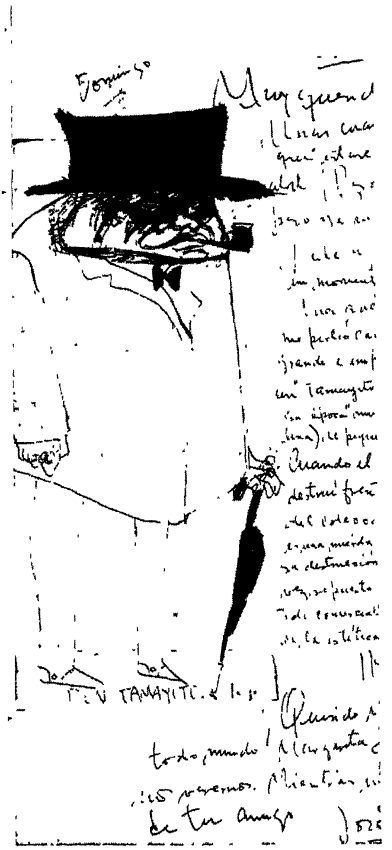
Tigres peeping from the skirts of saints the women praying in clusters

(*left*) Herón Martinez of Acatlán "This man would once have made pyramids" (*center*) Men of Chamula "Gathered sheepskins, bare legs, pink-tasseled, flat-brimmed hats" (*right*) Chiapas road, Hamos and Cohen

Detail of mural in Hospital de la Raza D -A Siqueiros

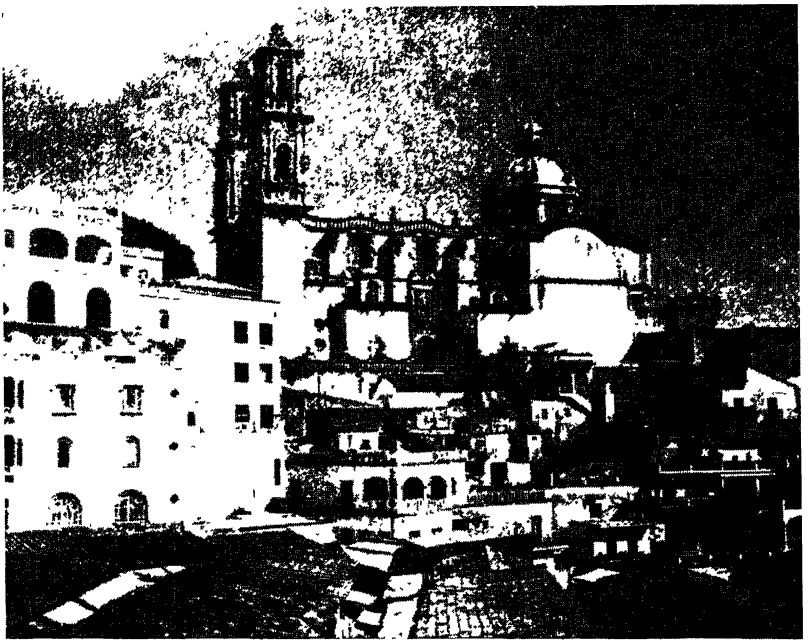
Siqueiros "thinks of himself as very handsome and very terrible," Diego said

Tamayo's "Birth of Nationality," Bellas Artes



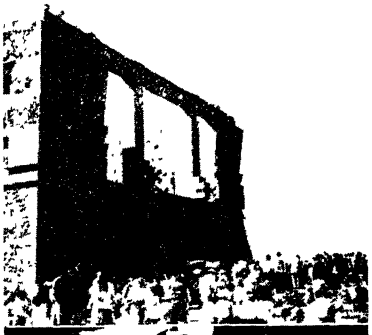
Letters from Cuevas. (*above*) While Diego gives the nod to Tamayo, Cuevas reassures Orozco's ghost. (*left*) "Don Tamayito in New York"

José Luis Cuevas in New York.



Santa Prisca, Taxco "God gives to Borda and Borda gives to God "

(*left*) Dr Atl (*right*) William Spratling and *Remojadas*

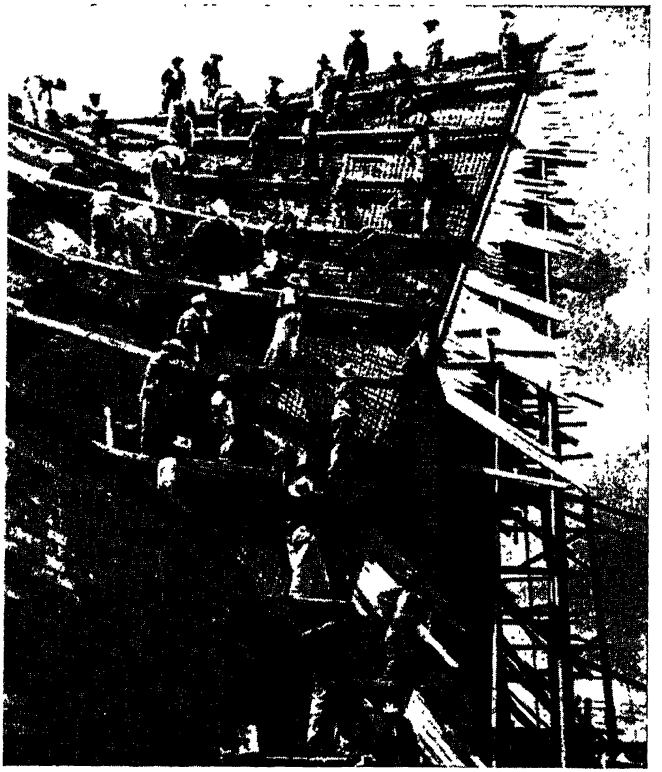


Diego Rivera's "tomb"

Diego "receiving" on 70th birthday.

Roberto Montenegro

Carlos Merida with one of his paintings.



Men make the shell.

(*left*) Candela's Cosmic Radiation Laboratory, University City (*right*) Felix Candela.

short of what Villanueva demanded; moreover, we would have nothing left over to get to Palenque, and from there to here for our plane back. The hotel manager refused to cash our check unless Montenegro endorsed it. I reported this to Don. "Oh, no," he said, doubled up with laughter, "not *again!* Why, Montenegro will go out of his mind! 'That American poet,' he'll say, 'if he *is* a poet, probably had no intention of even *coming* to Yucatán until he heard I was coming. I've endorsed one rubber check for him and now he's playing me for another. *Madre de Dios,* why did I ever meet him!' "

It was 10:30 A.M. when I knocked on the door after first phoning from the lobby that we were coming up on urgent business. There was a long wait. Finally Montenegro appeared in his bathrobe, sweat pouring from his face, looking as though he'd just seen the ghost of Malinche. I explained my mission, trying to keep a straight face and not notice Don's expression. But this time, though he hesitated, Montenegro's answer was No. "That manager Gonzalez insulted me the first time. He questioned my solvency." We went back into the lobby and told Gonzalez what we thought of him. It was small comfort. But we decided to go anyway, hoping for better luck with Paco Villanueva.

* * *

Most of the menu for breakfast this morning was in Spanish, of course, but some of it looked strangely familiar:

Hoot Keckes
Corn Fleckes
Meat with Ham Inside
Wild, with Red Sauce
Coutlettes in Ink Its

After sampling it gingerly, we made a tour of Campeche, beginning with the waterfront. The original forts, to guard the seaport against pirates, have been restored by President Ruiz Cortines. Each seventeenth-century turret was dominated by a scavenger in black robes, presenting the silhouette, as it took off, of an outsize bat. The town itself consists of one-story stone and stucco buildings beautifully weathered by the action of salt

spray against their pastel colors. Though the city depends, like Mérida, on underground sources of water, there are few windmills. Water is conveyed from house to house in huge blue barrels lying on their sides, slung between wheels and drawn by donkeys.

A long-drawn-out rebuff at the local bank, where we had made another futile effort to cash a check, may have affected our unfavorable impression of the local archeological museum, which is housed in an abandoned church. Apart from some large *stellae* with Maya reliefs from the nearby island of Jaina, it contains nothing but a few skulls (the front teeth tipped with jade), some broken pots, a handful of filigree jewelry of the late nineteenth century, the fading manuscript of a local seventeenth-century constitution, two nondescript guitars, two *trajes tipicos de la región* in faded lavendar (badly motheaten), a plaster cast of a neo-Roman head, a life-size wooden cigar-store Indian, a copy in tin of a key to the city presented by an early viceroy, and a tortoise-shell cane. A hideous contemporary mural, influenced by Picasso via Tamayo, in one of the transepts, depicts the rape and ultimate triumph of the Indian. Don called my attention to a glass case in a recess as we were going out. It contained the bones, in foetal position, of a King of Jaina. "His name is unknown," a label explained, "but he was 50 years old and measures 1 metre, 73 centimetres." *Sic transit* . . .

January 15, Tenosique

It is 4:30 A.M. and we have just arrived in this subtropical village after a very hot overnight train ride through steaming jungle growth. The roadbed must have been built in Díaz's day, when the old dictator was saving every *centavo* to stay in power —or by the British who were saving every cent to *keep* him there. It was like riding a bucking bronco: an accelerating crescendo of jolts, culminating in a thump that tossed one completely free of the berth at the various whistle stops—and there was one on an average of every ten minutes. A dozen or more inhabitants could be seen at these stations, squatting or standing in the dim blue light of a single bulb or kerosene flare; and once a couple of ten-year-old boys raced us down the tracks for half a kilometer, shouting and laughing.

Tenosique has two hotels: one, The Virgin, closed and dark; the other, The Cortés, lighted but also closed. We finally roused a reluctant attendant from his cot in the lobby of the latter. There we sat in half light until he switched the Delco engine off promptly at 7:00. At 7:30 we crossed the street and found Don Paco up and breakfasting in the Casa Villanueva. He couldn't have been more friendly or cooperative. Everything is arranged. Our credit? Of course. He is flying his Cessna to Agua Azul first, with the gas and outboard motor for the canoe. At 9:30 he'll be back and we'll take off on the first lap of our journey to Yaxchilán.

January 16, Yaxchilán

I am sitting writing this on the high bluff above the Usumacinta River looking across into Guatemala. This is jungle. It comes right down to the river bank, a dense tangle of cedar and mahogany against which at this moment a flock of bright red parrots is setting up a wild concerto. Down below, in the tethered dugout, Don is fishing. Three feet behind me, respectfully quiet but alert to my every move, stand three barefoot sons of Miguel de la Cruz, guardian of the ruins, whose father was guardian before him. The boys have probably never seen anyone write before, and they watch the words pour from the pen with a mixture of curiosity and awe. Three feet behind them is a thicket of bamboo; behind that, lianas, trailing from the hundred-foot-high forest giants; and behind that, in the higher reaches of the steep escarpment, a natural fortress in an arm of the river shaped like the Greek letter Omega: Yaxchilán.

We climbed among the ruins for three hours immediately after landing. The terrain has a floor of limestone, sharp and white with black markings, and rotted vegetation—a brown peat moss that looks and smells precisely like that surrounding the roots of laurels in the rocky hills behind my home in New Jersey! It's a slippery footing, and in many places we had to pull ourselves up by roots and lianas. How the ruins have survived the tentacles of this rankness of growth so many centuries is a mystery. Many haven't, of course. We found temple after temple split by trees, the roof caved in, the gates

filled with rubble. But at least four are intact. One has fragments of rose-and-blue frescoes still clinging to the walls. Another has remarkably complex low-relief carvings directly on the lintels above one's head as one enters. And a third has the center of its three doors blocked by the torso of a gigantic "King." The head of this stone figure has fallen and rolled to a spot fifty feet below, where it has assumed an upright position. The last of the wild Lacandóns from their home on the banks of the Cedro River near Bonampak make the arduous six-day pilgrimage here every year to see if the head of the statue is in its present position. Were it not, they say, the world would come to an end. The Lacandóns are the only surviving Maya tribe never to have been Christianized. One of them told our host: "But we're not afraid of the world's end. When that time comes, we'll be with all honest men [they never bring their women, or mention them] in paradise, the place where men are without fever or consumption and have only two children." Another added: "And my withered arm will return as it was in my youth, and all will be well."

Some of the Lacandón pilgrims walk not from Bonampak (less than twenty air miles away, though an arduous three days' hike—one way) but from a place even deeper in the Chiapas jungle, Chocul-Ha (Piedra Bola) to burn *copal* in their painted *braseros* to the ancient but unforgotten gods of their ancestors. They come here this month on their yearly journey of propitiation. But they say of Yaxchilán: "Our ancestors couldn't have built such a marvel. Only the gods could have." It is the ultimate architectural tribute. And it is also a melancholy comment on the Lacandóns' fall from grace and loss of confidence in themselves. They do not recognize their ancestry. They call themselves, alternately, Caribes. . . .

One of the higher temples (I think the one we dipped over in our Cessna before landing at Agua Azul to pick up our dugouts) has, stuck in front of it, its top broken ages past by the fall of a forest giant, an immense stone slab, six inches thick and perhaps ten feet high. The relief on it, beautifully weathered to lampblack in places, depicts a queen facing the temple. Dozens, perhaps hundreds, of other reliefed stones lie in the surrounding

matted jungle, a few covered by tar papers supplied recently but in inadequate numbers by the federal archeological bureau that pays Miguel, our host, his pittance. Under the tar papers, as Miguel lifted them reverently to display the skills of his ancestors, centipedes, lizards, and scorpions scuttled away. The webs and gauzelike roots of creepers had to be scraped off in many cases to reveal the picture writing.

Miguel de la Cruz is one of nature's noblemen. He was making a broom out of palm leaves and sisal rope, cutting the bamboo staff with his sword-length machete, when our dugouts arrived at his pier. He greeted us gravely, but with an added note of real pleasure when I informed him I carried greetings from "Pancho" Blom; then he resumed his work while his large family, and his brother's in an adjoining hut, went about their chores. Pigs, chickens, proud huffy turkeys, their blue hackles covered with red warts, and at least a dozen watchful and clever dogs "police (as we used to say in the army) the yard." Keeping the animals out of the huts is a chore in itself. The chickens, especially the young ones, lead a favored life, appearing to have the run of the baskets of corn, peanuts, and dried beans inside.

Miguel's intelligence is as obvious in his clear, sensitive eyes and animated response to questions as in his actual words. He informed us that the circular openings in the peaked ceilings of the temples may have been for beams to support the vaulting while the topmost stones were being placed in position. "Then, having served their purpose, the beams may have been removed, or rotted away." Did we want to see more of the covered stones? he asked.

"We've seen enough," we answered. "When you can't read the writing, a few serve."

"A tourist," Miguel added sagely, "has to see everything, including that which he can't understand at all."

"Then tourists visit Yaxchilán?" we asked.

He showed us a small visitors' book that Frans Blom had sent him as a present. In the years since he received it there had been 138 visitors. We counted sixty-nine Guatemalans, forty-five Mexicans, eighteen Americans, three Swiss, and three from British Honduras. All but the Mexicans and an American

archeologist named Robert Bruce had come by motor launch from Guatemala.

The Lacandóns, Miguel told us, are now reduced to perhaps six families, or a total of sixty individuals. Diseases, mostly pulmonary, introduced with the mahogany and chicle companies, decimated them. Those that are left suffer from a jungle worm which drops from the palm thatch into the hair and eats its way into the brain. (We looked up apprehensively into the thatching as Miguel talked, running our hands reflectively through our hair.) Sánchez Vera had already told us about this; a Mexican colleague of his had refused to believe it until one day his head began nodding convulsively and they had to take him to a hospital.

The chicle dealers with their sap buckets have left, but the lumbermen are systematically stripping the primeval forest, including even young trees. They evade government laws by the "usual methods"—cutting planks directly in the jungle clearings or giving federal inspectors "the bite."

* * *

From fragments offered by both Sánchez Vera and Miguel de la Cruz, we are beginning to reconstruct the drama of the discovery of Bonampak. The bulky Carnegie Institution report characteristically reduces it to such dry items as "study of the drainage area," "report of our expert on painting."

Bonampak (Maya for "Painted Walls") remained a secret, it seems, just as long as the Lacandóns had a chief. The last of these, a woman, died in the early 1940s. Then came Giles Healey, the American photographer whom destiny favored (as she usually does when a climactic event is about to happen) with just the right gifts. Healey, on many earlier treks through Chiapas, had compiled his own list of sites. He got along famously with the suspicious Lacandóns. He accompanied an archeological expedition to Bonampak in 1946, but it was when he returned later the same year *by himself* that he discovered (or was shown?) the great frescoes—a discovery that deserves to rank higher, for its contributions both to knowledge and to

art, than the much-publicized uncovering of Tutankhamen's tomb by Howard Carter in the twenties.

The frescoes are believed to have been painted between A.D. 730 and 820, when classic Maya art was at its height. What had preserved them almost perfectly was a semiopaque deposit of calcium carbonate. This had created over the centuries a protective film. Through it the murals could at first barely be detected. Healey found out that by applying kerosene to them with a brush, the colors and forms emerged just long enough to permit flash photography. Should the calciferous deposit be removed entirely, the frescoes would probably disintegrate—a fairly good guarantee that Bonampak will remain outside the orbit of tourism even longer than Yaxchilán. (The place to see the paintings now is Mexico City's National Museum of Archaeology, where painters have created an exact-scale replica of the three decorated chambers from sketches made on the spot with the aid of infrared and ultraviolet photographs.) Painted on wet lime, and possibly a whole wall to a single sitting since no joints show, the frescoes depict religious rites, bands of musicians, court scenes, battles in the jungle, triumphal parades with mutilated captives, and dance festivals. The colors are brilliant and the handling of action is without precedent in its realism.

Sánchez Vera, who accompanied Healey to Bonampak several times, describes the photographer as a chain smoker who carried a ham and a bag of dried beans in a sack over his shoulder. As he trudged through the jungle, with the Lacandóns cutting a path ahead of him with their machetes, he would reach over his shoulder from time to time for food. "With his film," the young archeologist told us, "Healey was generous. But his equipment was personal and sacred. A guide would sooner have touched the face of a Maya image than one of Healey's light meters or filters."

The impression is of an eccentric—dedicated, but to exactly what is still uncertain. The United Fruit Company (the American monopoly in Guatemala which Communists opposed, to gain whatever popularity they had there under Arbenz) paid the expenses for Healey's various expeditions, according to the captions in the Carnegie report. But Healey's alliance with United Fruit could not have been, at most, more than a marriage of

convenience. Sánchez Vera says (improbably!) that Healey is a hotel owner from Hollywood.[1]

* * *

Miguel ekes out a subsistence at Yaxchilán, thanks to the $150 a year the government allots him. His patch of corn, bananas, and sugar is across the Usumacinta, Guatemala being very possibly ignorant of his existence. Since every plane load into Agua Azul costs 400 *pesos* for gas alone, how does Miguel make out? Jaguar skins bring 175 *pesos*. "I bag them at night with a carbide lamp and the coffee spout." "The *what?*" "The coffee spout. I'll show you tonight when it gets dark." But tonight, by the time we thought of it, the coffee spout was being put to more domestic uses and we had to be content with a rank imitation of the way a coffee spout sounds when it's imitating a mating *tigre*. "A *guacamole* (macaw) brings 50 *pesos* alive," Miguel went on, "but they live in the highest trees. Try to catch one! A monkey? *Nada—mono nada.*"

After a little swimming—the current is so swift you have to dive in a hundred yards above your clothes and grab for them as you race by—we repaired to the main hut where our hammocks and mosquito bars, purchased in Tenosique, were being strung up and attached to the lateral rafter by the pilots of our canoe. We were glad to see that the pilots, Don Miguel, and his wife slept in hammocks too. We were already thoroughly bitten from a half-hour chat following supper—a can of spam and a bunch of bananas—under the full moon.

Sleeping in a hammock (for me, at any rate) is more uncomfortable than sleeping in one of General Díaz's trains. The jungle air was cold; there seemed to be more mosquitoes inside than out; my feet went to sleep and my neck got a crick in it. Hitting the sack . . . But Don, who spent some years in the Navy during the war, was having a bad time too. In the middle of the night we switched hammocks. Both sure of having tricked the other out of solid comfort, we slept soundly until sunrise.

[1] After returning to the United States I located Healey, who heads the Navigation Institute of the University of California Los Angeles. He is responsible for none of the details in this account, which were gathered entirely in the course of my trip and which may or may not be accurate. I hope to tell the full story of this remarkable man and his discovery in a later book.

8 THE LITTLE GRAND INQUISITOR AND THE ADVENTURE OF THE DERAILED TRAIN

Fishing for Robálo*—How Not to Treat a Bureaucrat —We Pay the Price—Tenosique-Palenque Train Derailed —Horses at Lacandón—Ride to the Ruins—The Ultimate Beauty—Return to Campeche—Huxley's Theory—Art Is Long*

January 17, Tenosique

The canoe trip *up* the Usumacinta from Yaxchilán this morning was more eventful than the trip down. We were bucking the current, and without the skilled boatmen we would have capsized in the rapids a dozen times. We also encountered a variety of wild life: several families of tiny duck; blue and white heron that waited until we approached to within twenty feet, and then took off *with us,* necessitating a second escape when we caught up; on the Mexican side, a treeful of medium-size monkeys, flocks of tanagers, parakeets and macaws; on the Guatemala side, two large crocodiles sunning themselves, one of which slept so soundly that we approached to within ten feet without waking him. If Barbachano had this concession, he'd arrange elaborate trips to the little white-sand islands we kept passing. If Disney had it, he'd probably import hippos—and I hate to think what else.

After photographing the only Lacandón in the region, a mongol-featured mother at Agua Azul, we took off once more in the *Usumacinta III,* and Don Paco, its capable pilot, invited us to go fishing with him this afternoon.

An hour after landing at Tenosique we boarded his mahogany-paneled launch and motored down the Usumacinta about three miles to where the *sábalo* and *robálo* were said to be run-

ning. The report was good. In less than half an hour Don and I had each landed a 25-pound *robálo,* using six-inch silver lures. After that, hatless, and wishing to avoid sunstroke, I had them drop me nearby at a shady bluff while Demarest and our host caught two more. The peasant at whose landing I'd gone ashore brought out his only chair, seated me under a grapefruit tree, climbed it and handed me from the branches a basket of delicious fruit. No matter what Palenque offers tomorrow, it can't be more delightful than the experiences of the past two days.

* * *

Back in Tenosique, as we were about to settle down to a dinner of fried *robálo* with Don Paco and his lovely wife, the roof fell in. (Fortunately it was made of paper.) We were cashing a traveler's check in Don Paco's store, preparatory to buying a quiver of Lacandón arrows, when a small, evil-looking man accosted us and demanded to see our identification. I had just descended from the last of half a dozen trips to our room on the second floor of The Cortés, Tenosique's only two-story building, so by the time I'd found my tourist card and returned to the store I was irritated. I made the mistake of tossing it in his lap. Instantly his sallow face went white. We must accompany him to the Immigration Office, he said. I asked to see *his* papers. He actually was an official. We followed him silently through the unlighted back streets to his "office"—the front room of his home.

It was 7:00 o'clock. Slowly he drew out a huge typewriter and laboriously inserted into it six sheets of blue-and-white forms separated by carbons. Then he settled down to what was obviously going to be a very long session. I thought of the railway clerk who had so exasperated Flandrau in 1908—"pausing now and then to lean and look at the ceiling as if in the throes of composing a sonnet." Smacking his thin lips with anticipation of the pleasures he intended to derive from our ordeal, José May (for such was his name) asked our nationality. We responded.

"Americanos? From what country do you come?" We responded again.

"Es—ta—dos U—ni—dos. He spelled out every letter of the hated words as he pecked them out fiercely (and as slowly as possible) on his Smith-Corona. The Inquisition had begun; and much as we may have been to blame for precipitating it, I couldn't help feeling that this xenophobia must be a by-product of the regime of the fanatical Garrido Canabál. It was that governor of Tabasco under Calles who had forced priests to marry within ninety days or quit the state, who had named his two sons Lucifer and Lenin, and who has been immortalized as the villain of Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory*.

Seeing that my tourist card was in order, our inquisitor asked me to sign my name on a blank sheet of paper, ostentatiously covering the signature on the card to make it clear that he didn't trust me. Then he turned his attention to Don Demarest, who confessed that he had no papers with him.

"Ah-han!" José May leered. "No right to be in Mexico at all! How did you get here in the first place?"

I looked at Don apprehensively, fearing an outburst. He has been living in Mexico for years and loves the Mexicans so much he has adopted one to augment his own family of four. He shifted his heavy frame in the wicker chair. His habitually ruddy face turned a shade redder. But he controlled himself. He explained that he had immigration papers but that he didn't carry them about for fear of losing them. "We came here," he added hopefully, "on government tickets by courtesy of the Ministry of Tourism."

"Writers?" Señor May almost spat the words in his contempt. "And where are these alleged government tickets?"

We'd left them in our room, of course, but I seized the opportunity to inform Don Paco of our plight. I was given permission to fetch them. Don Paco had left his house a few minutes before in his car. His wife had no idea where he'd gone but would send him to the rescue the moment he returned. At the official's office, meanwhile, the Grand Inquisitor had made a startling discovery. He had asked Demarest in turn to write his name on a blank sheet. After studying it for some time, his face lighted. Grabbing my tourist card he shook it under Don's nose triumphantly.

"So you make a false declaration!" he crowed. "You write 'Demarest' and the card says 'Rodman'!"

Don was trying to explain that we were two different people, when Don Paco arrived and prepared to share our vigil. By the time I got back with the plane tickets, Demarest explained that they wouldn't be needed. Our friend had embarked on a fresh tack. He had shifted his whole offensive to Don now and was prepared to make us suffer by taking advantage of the letter of the law. Don explained for the fifth time that his papers were in Mexico in good order, but, each time, our tormentor shook a pamphlet under his nose, citing chapter and verse:

"The Law says . . . It says here perfectly clearly . . . I know *nothing* about Mexico; we are in Tabasco . . . Read for yourself what it says in the small type."

Technically, of course, he was right. One should travel with all one's papers.

"What did you say your nationality was? . . . Will you spell those words? . . . And *where* in the U. S., please?"

"New Orleans," Don said.

"You mean—*Nueva Orleans*?"

This was too much for Don. "We pronounce it New Orleans," he snapped, "in New Orleans." I signaled to him to calm down.

Quite possible José May could have demanded that we return to the capital at once, or even clapped us in jail, but probably Don Paco's disapproving presence prevented him from going so far. He compromised by taking a time-honored course among bureaucrats—he would pass us along to another bureaucrat. An hour had already elapsed. During the next hour, Señor May proceeded to type a voluminous report, though it actually covered but one sheet single-spaced. He asked Don every fact about his past and his future that he could think of. He even stood him up against a wall behind the door where he pretended to check with a ruler (I noticed that he had the side with the figures turned away from him) the height which Don had given him. If he'd had scales, he'd have weighed him.

Finally he pronounced, with solemnity, his verdict. Señor Demarest would have to report to the immigration officials in Campeche, and also in Mexico. Telegrams would be sent to both

of these offices informing them of our imminent arrival. If Don failed to report and fill out the proper forms—handing him the six copies of the report to sign—he would be deported from the country. "If, as I suspect, you turn out to be here illegally, you will be deported to where you came from—at once."

I looked at Don Paco. His eyes were lowered. In Mexico, with the Revolution become official, a pervasive fear of soldiers and federal officialdom remains. The resignation on Don Paco's face, his obvious fear of running afoul of the higher unseen powers with their seals, revenue stamps, and interminable forms, reminded me unpleasantly of Germany. The gigantic words in black paint that still (after almost six years) deface the square of even this remote hamlet in the provinces, "VOTE FOR RUIZ CORTINES THE CANDIDATE OF THE REVOLUTION AND ITS CONTINUER!" (when there was no other candidate to vote for seriously), reminded me of how much we have to be thankful for at home, living under a system of checks and balances with at least a degree of freedom to damn the powers-that-be.

Don Paco at dinner shrugged off the whole affair, and for our part we were happy to have come out of it so painlessly, and not unapologetic for our initial degree of guilt. But this morning a friend of Don Paco's, who had been drinking with us at a café in the square before the incident, approached us as we were boarding the 4:55 A.M. train for Palenque.

"It's an outrage," he exploded, "a damnable outrage! My country *lives* on American tourism. Where would we be without it? And this is the way we treat you!" We protested that the fault had been ours and that we had always been treated with courtesy in Mexico; but in the train we yielded to the more human reaction—how to put that jackal, José May, in his place! Unfortunately, our most brilliant idea came too late. Don Paco had assured us that what the petty official really wanted was a *mordida*—a bite, a bribe. If we had given him one, with Don Paco as witness, we could have reported him to the Ministry of Tourism with some assurance that he would have been jacked out of that swivel chair. Not that the *mordida* doesn't remain a practice at every level, but that the Ministry is said to be doing its best to protect visitors from its more flagrant abuses.

January 18, Palenque

I wrote the word "Palenque" here in anticipation of a routine arrival. Never was a more premature date line written!

It is 7:09 A.M. and our train (optimistically called a "*rápido*") has just jumped the tracks. We are sitting somewhere in the jungle twenty or thirty kilometers short of our destination. Ten of the eleven passenger cars are still on the rails, but the eleventh, as well as two cattle cars, an oil tanker, the baggage car, and the engine, rounded a curve and are listing on the embankment in a jumble of rotted ties.

The hundreds of native passengers are resigned to their fate. Rumor has it that another train will come to the rescue and pull us back to Tenosique—in about ten hours. We are not resigned. If we stay here, we won't see Palenque. We are about to continue our journey, on foot.

9:30 A.M., *Lacandón*

After carrying our six bags and quiver of arrows through the disabled train, we reached the engine. The damage was more serious than we'd believed. The cars that jumped the track had one set of wheels in the middle of the roadbed, the other on the embankment, causing a 45-degree list. Half a mile of antique ties had been reduced to soggy splinters.

First we tried to gain recruits. Looks of pity, as though we ought to have our heads examined. . . . Nobody wants to leave the scene of the crime. We tried to rent a horse from an elderly peon who rode by on one. "I must consult my father," he said —disappearing for good. At the head of the train, a soldier informed us that a repair cab would arrive shortly from up ahead with new ties—as if ties were what was needed!

"Good," I said to Don, "we'll bum a ride on it when it leaves, wherever it goes."

"Only as far as Lacandón, ten kilometers from here," said the soldier, who spoke English. "You better stay with us. There'll be a relief train soon."

"Never," I said to Don; "we're moving, and not back but forward."

"Stupid Americanos with their arrows and cameras!" I heard an unkind civilian remark as I took snapshots of the damaged underpinnings.

But, stupid or not, the two Americans were the only passengers to leave the wreck that morning, and five minutes later we were seated with a repair crew on the gasoline-powered cab, enjoying a free ride up the wobbly tracks to Lacandón.

Arriving in the tiny station, I stood watch over our baggage while Don set out to canvas the village for horses. Palenque, we were told, was some twenty-five kilometers further along, and one could ride a horse to it, though few had done so. In half an hour we had the horses, five of them—one for each of us, one for our guide, a distinguished-looking, white-haired *caballero* named Don Juan Dominguez, and the other two for his boys with our luggage. While I'd been waiting for Don, my presence in the train shed, which doubles as Lacandón's primary school, caused quite a stir. The station master is also the school teacher, and today he wasn't teaching. I amused the children by reading from their primers in my grotesque accent and then explaining (with some exaggeration) that I didn't understand a word of what I'd read.

When Don returned, I set out in search of beer and bananas. I began by buying a sombrero that fitted very badly. (All Mexicans, apparently, have very small heads.) I paid seven *pesos* for it. The proprietor charged me an additional twenty *centavos* for a piece of string to attach it under my chin.

"You have bananas?" I asked.

"Bananas," he replied, "are full of starch."

"You have beer, then?"

"Beer is very indigestible, especially when taken with bananas. But I have some."

"Cold?"

"Certainly not. Cold beer on a hot day gives one cramps. I have warm beer."

"My friend," I said, "you impress me not only as a financial wizard—I refer to that extra twenty *centavos* you charged me —and as a man who is probably destined to become Minister of Finance; you impress me also as a man of science. Do I have the honor of addressing a physician?"

Amid laughter from the peasants at the counter, he extended his hand.

"You are right, Señor, on both counts. I am a businessman, the first of this community; and as to the physician part, yes, the only."

Reports were coming in that the salvage train was due from Palenque, but we mounted our steeds. Don thought perhaps we ought to wait, but I pointed out that even if it arrived in an hour, it would take another two to load those sedentary citizens aboard flatcars, and perhaps another to reach Palenque. "Surely," I said, "we'll make it in three; we'll be the first to get to the hotel, and to get out on another train—if there is one."

"What are we waiting for?" he said.

1:30 P.M., *Palenque*

The ride took four hours instead of three, but the relief cars were only just pulling out of here on their way to the wreck as we arrived. It was a grueling ride—for me, anyway. I hadn't been on a horse in years. My calves began to be chafed almost as soon as my buttocks. Posting, or standing up in the stirrups, to relieve first one agony and then the other, I finally took the last half hour sidesaddle.

Arriving bruised and tired, we galloped none the less across the station plaza in pursuit of a Jeep truck that was starting to pull out. The driver turned out to be the manager of the La Croix Hotel, who took us to his establishment where we put our bags in a room. Then, grabbing a couple of ham sandwiches and four bottles of that excellent Yucatecan beer, *Carta blanca*, we piled back into the truck for the ruins, half an hour's drive beyond the village.

* * *

Cortés had passed within a few miles of the ruins of Palenque in 1525 on his march to Guatemala without suspecting their existence; they had been ruins for centuries even then, the great civilization that built them long forgotten. I had read the account of the American traveler, John L. Stephens, who visited the site in the forties of the last century. Stephens had not been its

discoverer—a French antiquarian, Dupaix, had visited Palenque a decade earlier—but Stephens was probably the first to appreciate its romantic beauty, and his traveling companion, an English artist named Catherwood, embellished his account with some excellent drawings of the Maya sculpture.

Their visit took place during the rainy season. They were devoured by mosquitoes. Their thirty or forty Indian porters refused to spend the night in the ruins, which were reputed to be haunted. Half the population of the village had just been swept off by cholera. Stephens himself became the victim of ticks and had to be carried out of Chiapas in a litter. But the exaltation of the place stayed with him:

> We lived in the ruined palaces of kings; we went up to their desolate temples and fallen altars; and wherever we moved we saw evidences of their taste, their skill in arts, their wealth and power. . . . We called back into life the strange people who gazed at us in sadness from the walls. . . . In the romance of the world's history, nothing ever impressed me more forcibly than the spectacle of this once great and lovely city, overturned, desolate, and lost; discovered by accident, overgrown with trees for miles around, it did not have even a name to distinguish it. Apart from everything else, it was a mourning witness to the world's mutations.
>
> *Nations melt*
> *From Power's high pinnacle, when they have felt*
> *The sunshine for a while, and downward go.*

It was good to see Palenque in the eerie, ruined light. And it was good to have seen it *last*. It should always be seen last. The jungle setting, the compactness of the temples, the devastating power and purity of the reliefs make a combination that Chichen-Itzá with its range, Uxmal with its unity of design, and Yaxchilán with its inaccessible mystery cannot match. One feels that everything at Palenque reached perfection and that with this thrilling achievement, this absolute esthetic pitch, things had to fall apart.

"There," I remarked to Don as we stood amid the thunderheads on the peak of the Temple of Inscriptions, watching a tiny native woman draw water from the original aqueduct and

disappear in the riot of "elephant ears" on the encroaching jungle's edge, "there goes the last Mayan—precisely like the first, in her bare feet, white *huipil*, and pigtails, except that the tin pail would have been an earthenware jug."

But for the likes of her, or her prototype, what use had the aristocrats and sorcerers who built these architectural masterpieces? She planted the corn, bore and raised the children, perhaps carried some of the smaller building blocks. The male slaves carried the larger ones, including the five-ton plinth which our friend Ruz of Mérida raised with windlasses and jacks when he discovered the King's Tomb under this temple four years ago. When the worker ants weren't building for the celestial architects, they were providing the cannon fodder.

It was not difficult to imagine Palenque as it must have been. The priests cutting out hearts—but in moderation, this early—at the altars. The king reviewing his feathered division on the banks of the Otolum. And then—panic! A dispatcher rides in (or rather, is carried in by porters, because the pre-Columbians, amazingly, had domesticated no animals) to announce that Yaxchilán and Bonampak have fallen to the barbarians; and that Uxmal and Chichen in Yucatán, still mere aggregations of thatched barracks, have joined with the Quichés from Guatemala and even talk of making an alliance with the savage nomads from the north.

The shudder of panic, this first one, the sense that comfort and the convention of centuries of ritual count for more than resistance to aggression, sets up its disintegrating rhythm throughout the whole civilization and its institutions. The rhythm is accelerated by the hostility of nature, the hills denuded of forest having lost their fertile topsoil, and by the sudden awareness that the all-powerful priests—with their claims to be in intimate daily communion with Chac, the rain god—are presiding over a desert. Nor will these vibrations cease until the living trees grow through the dead walls, bringing them finally down, and the archeologists pitch camp with their repair crews to make a safe and orderly attraction for the tourist.

Fortunately the archeologists who have worked at Palenque have not gone far with their restoration. Cropping the jungle around the ruins and keeping it cropped (for the jungle moves

in, almost perceptibly) was of course a necessity, but it has added greatly to the beauty of these hilltop temples, whose steep steps have yet to be excavated; it has provided them with soft, velvety bases, like so many exquisite funerary urns in a museum's luxurious cabinet.

In addition, Palenque has had allies in the elements. Limestone deposits have not only preserved many of the low reliefs but have added a lace fretwork to the portals: stalactites like marble icicles. Water has streaked the graying stone with superb greens and blacks. Emerald moss has filled the cracks. And finally an orange lichen (similar to the one that grows on Christophe's Citadel in Haiti) has covered many a shattered arch and crumbling vault with its magical coloration.

We left, not only deeply moved by the human and inhuman handiwork we had seen, but grateful that circumstances had brought us here when they did, and that in our exploration of these hermetic mysteries we had been wholly and altogether *alone*.

11:55 P.M.

We've left Palenque, but we're still in Chiapas. As a matter of fact, I'm writing this on a siding about a mile from the scene of this morning's derailment as I wait for the wrecked (but now righted) train to pass us on its way to Palenque. Amazingly, none, or almost none, of the 500-odd passengers took advantage of the two flatcars provided for them by the relief train that pulled into Palenque some five hours after we did on our horses. Had we waited, not only would we not have seen Palenque but we would have lost our reservations back to Mexico.

January 19, Campeche

Our train from Tenosique this morning arrived in Campeche four hours late, giving us a great deal of time to see a town whose attractions we had already exhausted. Not having eaten much of anything in twenty-four hours, we spent our first hour making up for this. Pea soup with croutons, pork in lentils, fried shrimp with tomatoes and mayonnaise, *arróz con pollo*, fried plantains, *flan*, and coffee.

At the post office where we went to mail a dozen cards, we received a new slant—the middle-class slant—on primitive peoples. The stamp clerk was a motherly, spectacled woman in her fifties. She looked at the picture of a Lacandón shooting an arrow:

"*Sucio!* Ugh! Filthy people! I can smell them now . . ."

* * *

To the question whether the great arts of pre-Columbian Mexico meant anything to anyone before the restless eclectics of our time, I quote the testimony of Albrecht Dürer, who in 1520 saw jewels and gold figurines which Moctezuma had sent to Cortés the year before. Cortés in turn had dispatched the treasure to Charles V. "These things," the great German artist wrote, "are so precious that they were valued at a hundred thousand gulden. But I have never seen in all my days what so rejoiced my heart. For I saw among them amazing artistic objects, and I marveled over the subtle ingenuity of the men in these distant lands." (The Spaniards, more impressed with their monetary value, promptly melted them down.)

For all that, it is difficult if not impossible for us to fathom the *logic* of these arts. What were the Mayas trying to say? The archeologists tell us little. The pyramids at Chichen and Uxmal and Palenque were probably erected to mark the lapse of time between some great event and the then present. That much we can guess. But it isn't much. Aldous Huxley, describing the mysteries of Copán across the border in Honduras, had this to say about it: "Time is unbearable. To make it bearable, men transform it into something that is not time, that has the quality of space." But he adds: "What causes a people, or at any rate the thinking part of a people, to become as acutely time-conscious as the priestly mathematicians of the Maya Old Empire?" His answer is: a series of personal accidents. "A man is born to whom, for whatever reasons, time is an obsession. It also happens that he possesses the kind of abilities which enable him to solve his problem—the problem of the intellectual mastery and transformation of time—in comprehensible quantitative terms. Furthermore, as luck will have it, he is in a position to influence his fellows."

It is an answer, but not *the* answer. The mystery remains. Best of all, the art remains. Nor do we have to be obsessed by time to be thrilled by it. The same qualities that appeal to us in Athens, in Chartres, in the Sistine, in the National Preparatory School appeal to us here. Perhaps it is the *only* constant in variable history. The wars, the social institutions, the dates, and the names are swept away. Art remains!

9 MEXICO CITY

Landscape—Domestic Difficulties—An Espontáneo *—Mme. de la Barca, with Reflections on Santa Anna—A Quick Getaway—Children in Mexico—Dust Storm—I Meet the "Porfirio Rubirosa of Mexico"—And Its Loveliest Actress—A Mexican Movie—V.I.P. Gossip*

January 20, Mexico

I am sitting on the balcony of our house in San Angel—it is much too cold to sit inside it—and this is what I see. To my left, a garden overgrown with weeds containing many large pieces of weathered cement sculpture; at the far end a swimming pool, long since cracked and abandoned to the spiders and stray dogs. To my right is a deep gully, one of those eroded chasms criss-crossing all Mexico that contain raging torrents only in the rainy season. The bottom of this one contains a trickle of oily green water with soap suds, and its banks are littered with garbage and bottles. A "ford" leads across this *barranca* to a fairly new house of red clay with pier supports ten feet thick. The driveway is lined with banana trees encased in wrapping paper. Immediately below me is the high brick wall that surrounds our own cluster of houses, its top the usual array of broken glass set in concrete. A plank leads to it from our terrace, and on this plank sits a gray cat. Water is dripping from the tank on our roof, evidence of the latest unsuccessful attempt to get our plumbing to work. A small black bird with a breast as red as a flame has just lighted in the pine tree behind the immense gates in the wall of volcanic rock that leads to the alley of ghostly trees. The sun is setting toward Acapulco.

January 21

Driving down Insurgentes toward the Reforma this morning, I noticed that the driver of the truck in front of me wasn't paying much attention to the road. The reason: he was brandishing a bottle of Pepsi-Cola in one hand. In the back of his Ford pickup was a stack of Admiral television sets. On the tail gate in provocative red letters was this sign:

MADE IN MEXICO FOR MEXICANS!

I turned into Chapultepec Park, under the gigantic oaks that are said to have shaded Moctezuma, to visit the Castle, haunted with memories of Madero, Díaz, and Maximilian. It is a crummy castle and it houses a crummy collection. No other word can describe the bad portraits (most of them copies of copies), gaudy furnishings, and tawdry heirlooms that are displayed without imagination or dignity—and half the time without labels. Even Orozco's mural of Juárez triumphing over Maximilian succumbs to the bad taste of the surroundings; it is a glorified cartoon strip.

January 22

Is this house we're living in a symbol of Mexico? Or is it we who read into it our own anxieties? Here am I, a lifelong lover of the arts who oftimes deplores "American materialism," finding myself in the position of resenting the peon who spends all day weeding the flowerbeds. Why, I find myself asking, is he being asked to do all this "useless" prettifying—and the gardens that surround us are undeniably pretty—when the suggestion that he make our toilet work elicits nothing more than an offended shake of the head? The two incompetent females who "run" this establishment—that is, collect rent and wash their hands of services—hate us for making our utilitarian demands. And in self-defense we are coming to hate them for ignoring our comforts. And, by extension, for their willingness to provide for the esthetic!

I'm able to give this some perspective when I overhear, as I did this morning, the conversation of the American pleasure-

seeking, child-neglecting divorcée who is our neighbor. Waiting half an hour to put in my own call at the telephone in the main house, I amused myself by jotting down bits of hers:

"I haven't heard from you for *ages!* . . . Oh, pretty good . . . They're giving me Vitamin-B shots. . . . Rubio, at The Bomber's, all set. . . . Ah-hun, ah-hun . . . Oh? . . . You got my message about the Cuban Ambassador? . . . I *could* get you an interview. . . . Well, how much do *I* get? . . . You have any money, by the way? . . . How about the Schweppes account? . . . That bit? O.K. I'll keep in touch with Pat. . . . Well, they might be able to pour us on the plane after the party. . . . Ah-hun . . . Why don't you leave me some money after you go? . . . A quick $1.65 or so . . . O.K. Will do. . . . Have fun. . . . 'Bye now."

Is the Mexican landlady's conversation with her aging *novio* any more edifying? All day he sits in her parlor, eating her food, making his phone calls, reading her snatches out of tattered copies of the Spanish editions of *Life* and *The Reader's Digest.* Probably the only lesson that can be drawn from all this is that we are what we are, and that to pass judgment on one's neighbors is a self-indulgence. It's fun, though! Especially when one is freezing with cold from their damp stone walls, and the one tiny kerosene burner doesn't work, and one clutches at anything to keep one's blood circulating. This evening we played poker with four students from Mexico City College, all of us wrapped in blankets over our sweaters and coats. It was too cold to go to bed.

January 23

It's not a sport but an art—they say.

Angel Peralta started it, fighting from a horse, the horse stepping like a ballet dancer, the *matador* appearing to be in less danger than when afoot.

The next fighter cut an ear, but looked most engaging when he stopped all the proceedings to comb his long, oily hair.

Then came a succession of bad bulls, till finally a small riot broke out in a section of the stands and the police intervened to eject the rioters. One jumped the *barrera* into the ring, and as a policeman chased him along a wall, members of the crowd

leaned over, dumped paper cups of beer on his head, and even hit him.

But the climax came on the next bull. An urchin of not more than twelve vaulted into the ring. Eluding the *toreros* who tried to intercept him, he executed three good passes with his tattered *capa*. On the fourth, the beast hooked him in the groin and he fell on his face, covering it with his arms. He was carried out, waving to the wildly applauding mob, but before he reached the exit, he fainted.

This is what they call an *espontáneo* (spontaneity). The child's death will be a brief sensation in tomorrow's press.

January 24

It hasn't rained here since we arrived in October. One has a tendency, waking up day after day to the hot sun after the cold nights, to think Mexico peculiarly favored by nature. But as my eye descends from the burnished sky to the *barranca*, with its trickle of polluted water, knowledge corrects sensation. There's a *barranca* like this near Guadalajara that is said to be almost as deep as the Grand Canyon, cutting across many states for hundreds of miles. Here, in the Central Plateau, almost *all* streams run through *barrancas* and hence contribute nothing to irrigation and fertility. During the rainy season, water from the slopes (denuded, as in Haiti, by the exigencies of charcoal burning and building, but here by mining too) carries the precious topsoil to the ocean. The rest of the time a bitter struggle goes on to feed the population, which has doubled since 1910 and which, it is estimated, will reach 45,000,000 thirteen years from now. The rich tropical regions are at the mercy of *too much* water—as much as 120 inches in some Gulf regions, as against none at all in Sonora. As a result, disastrous floods and unpredictable hurricanes threaten to turn such new irrigation systems as the Papaloapan into real man-made cataclysms.[1] Northern Mexico depends almost entirely on such irrigation systems, and the Central Plateau increasingly. The problem in this area is aggravated, of course, by the enormous unnatural concentration

[1] The 1944 hurricane dropped ten thousand million tons *all at once* on this area. In 1951 the new Cárdenas Dam at San Luis Potosí had to be dynamited in the wake of a flood in the Pánuco River basin.

of population here in the capital (it is one of three cities in Latin America with over 3,000,000). As the city grows, water has to be diverted from further and further away. Already the Lerma River, one of the few Mexican streams that naturally irrigate their own basins, is being tapped. And last week it was indicated in the papers that vast new sources will have to be found to re-establish the water-table *under* Mexico City which, since Lake Texcoco was finally drained a few years ago after centuries of effort,[2] has been sinking into a spongy sump at the rate of eighteen inches a year! In less than fifty years, it is estimated, the city will drop below the level of its own gravity-fed sewage outlet. To prevent this, nothing will suffice but to tap water resources *outside* the valley, at the same time replacing the underground supply. The final irony came in 1949 when the government, in answer to cries for help from the (once) lake cities of Xochimilco and Chalco, which were being reduced by the drainage projects to stinking bogs, began to pump water back into the canals. But the cost of correcting the water balance for the whole city, they say, will amount to $160,000,000 annually —or one third of Mexico's total present budget.

Simpson,[3] despite his somewhat Marxist point of view, acknowledges toward the end of his book that General Zapata's advisers in the agrarian revolution of 1913-1919 were naïve when they thought an equal distribution of land would end rural Mexico's poverty. By 1950, 63,000,000 acres had been distributed in *ejidos*, and the process continues. But as early as 1945 the resulting shortage of food was so fearful that the president of the Bank of Mexico (which finances the *ejidos*) risked his political neck by calling for a halt. In 1947 the 200,000 remaining "small proprietors" were producing on their 5,700,000 acres 70 per cent of all the crops in the country. The average holding of the 1,222,910 *ejidatarios* in 1940 was 14.3 acres of (mostly bad) land, and most of these communal farmers with primitive tools farmed *only for subsistence.*

[2] "The Castilians," writes Leslie Bird Simpson in *Many Mexicos*, "were strictly land animals, and once the novelty of their new capital had worn off, they set to work to make it resemble as closely as possible the parched cities of their beloved Castile."

[3] *Op. cit.* The source of many of my figures in this entry.

"It became plain," Simpson writes, "that unless and until the *ejidatarios* could be induced to abandon subsistence farming and produce a surplus for the hungry cities, they could not be entrusted with that vital responsibility." The Alemán regime, by encouraging the small proprietors with subsidies, loans, and guaranteed prices, produced for the first time (1950) enough food to go around. The real point is that the communal farmer, since he doesn't produce a surplus, *can't become a consumer of industrial services,* and Mexico's whole future is being staked by her present rulers on the success of industrialization.

January 25

Beebe goes to a Catholic kindergarten around the corner. Among a hundred boys and girls, she's the only American. We had misgivings about sending her. After all, she didn't know half a dozen words of Spanish—or any of the children. But we were thinking in American terms. She was accepted at once. The fact that she was "different" made her the more sought after. She loves every minute of it.

The four Demarest children have been brought up wholly in Mexico, in the Mexican way. They speak Spanish; English only brokenly, when they have to. They accept Chu-chu, the Indian child of the cook, as one of themselves. They accepted Beebe, the day we arrived, in the same fashion. They had fewer toys than she, but gave her theirs. They had little money, but used it all to buy her sweets at the corner grocer. They have few inhibitions and absolutely no pretentions. They are never thinking, as American children constantly do, of what others will think of them, their clothes, their home, their parents; nor do they ever ask, "What can we do now?"

Helen Augur describes the education of the Zapotec child this way. "He is *allowed* to participate, to be useful, so that his education as a child is not a matter of learning, through contrived tasks and games, skills which he will later apply to real life, but learning to clean wool or pat clay as an actual part of the family industry." What really fascinates Mexican children, she adds, is *work*. "They are not excluded from the adult world, and there is no strict dividing line between parents and children. The children are parents, too. . . ."

It has been observed that children in Mexico do not talk back to parents, much less yell at them the way many American children are permitted to do. Do they find respect and obedience "frustrating"? There is no sign of it. Mexican children, Flandrau observed half a century ago, "rarely cry, rarely quarrel, and their capacity for amusing themselves with nothing is without limit. Had I the orderings of this strange, unhappy world, I think all children would be born Mexican and remain so until they were fifteen."

As usual, he was right.

January 26

I was reading about Santa Anna in Mme. Calderón de la Barca's memoirs this morning. There is a pretty engraving on the cover, *señoras* and *caballeros* promenading in the Zócalo, c. 1840. Beebe looked at it and asked why they wore long dresses and beards.

"That was in the old days," I explained.

"Will the old days come again, Dad?"

"Never again."

"But I want them to come back. I don't want any of the old days to be gone forever."

Perhaps I should have explained that in the pages of such a writer as Fanny Calderón the past does continue to live. But this Scotch girl who married the first Spanish Ambassador to independent Mexico was herself afflicted with a presentiment that the Mexican *present* was ephemeral:

> Here, everything reminds us of the past; of the conquering Spaniards who seemed to build for eternity, impressing each work with their own solid, grave and religious character; of the triumphs of Catholicism; and of the Indians when Cortés first startled them from their repose, and stood before them like the fulfillment of a half-forgotten prophecy. It is the present that seems like a dream, a pale reflection of the past. All is decaying and growing fainter, and men seem trusting to some unknown future. One revolution follows another, yet the remedy is not found. Let them beware lest half a century later, they be awakened from their delusion, and find the cathedral turned into a meeting house, and all painted white; the *railing* melted down;

the silver transformed into dollars; the Virgin's jewels sold to the highest bidder; the floor washed (which would do it no harm), and round the whole, a nice new wooden paling, freshly done in green—and all this performed by some of the artists from the *wide-awake* republic farther north!

How nearly this disaster came to pass—and how soon! Mme. Calderón describes the oft-"retired" Santa Anna at Manga de Clavo, where she and her husband breakfasted with him, as having a philosophic, melancholy expression, and of speaking "frequently" of his famous leg, interred shortly before in a mausoleum at the capital. "It is strange," she notes astutely, "how frequently this expression of philosophic resignation is to be remarked on the countenances of the deepest, most ambitious, and most designing men." She also tells the story of Santa Anna, during one of his eight presidencies, being called out of an audience with a bishop and never bothering to come back: the President's favorite fighting cock had taken sick, it seems. But even Fanny Calderón could not foresee that within a few years this man would come within an ace of bringing her dire prophecy to pass. In sixty minutes at San Jacinto, facing Sam Houston whose losses totaled three dead and eighteen wounded, Santa Anna left behind him 400 dead, 200 wounded, 730 prisoners, and (in return for his personal liberty) all of Texas, and the faith of Mexicans in their leadership. And shortly after that at Chapultepec, when Santa Anna had enough fresh troops to defeat General Winfield Scott but preferred to see a political foe, Valencia, humiliated on the field of battle, he surrendered additionally $15,000,000, the cancellation of all unpaid claims, *and almost half the entire area of the republic.*

January 26

Unable longer to suffer the damp cold of San Angel and the more chilling penury of our landlady, we have moved to a pleasant apartment on the Calle Marsella in the center of town. In the final moments of our flight—which was shared by two students from the University who had had their firewood removed in reprisal for a threat to withhold rent until given some sort of ice-box—there was a wild throwing of light switches, and threats. Both parties called in the police—who refused to enter

because of the presence of a police dog. Our landlady threatened to report us to the American Embassy and we threatened to have her blacklisted with the Department of Tourism. As we left, a shot fired in bravado from a pistol, dating back perhaps to Santa Anna, knocked out an inoffensive street lamp.

* * *

I took my first walk from our new apartment this noon. The streets were dark and headlamps were blazing through a pall of what looked like yellow fog. Pedestrians held handkerchiefs over their mouths and noses but otherwise went about their business. My eyes began to smart and I asked the fruit vendor on the corner of Dinamarca where the dust, for that is what it was, was coming from. "Lake Texcoco," he answered laconically.

"How come?"

"They drained it, so every time the wind blows from that direction we have *this*."

Within half an hour it was raining—for the first time since October—and the streets became slippery with half an inch of pink mud.

* * *

I had a drink at the Roberto Montenegro Bar of the Del Prado with Goeritz and a friend of his he wanted me to meet, a man he had described variously as "a genius without aims" and "The Porfirio Rubirosa of Mexico." He was exaggerating on both counts. Edmundo Lasalle may possibly keep the women of the international set on their toes, but he is a far more intelligent and cultured man than the Dominican playboy—or than his American counterpart. For some years he has been chief public relations officer for the Celanese Corporation outside the U. S. But "like every other Mexican businessman, I have to hold down several jobs at once to make a living, with the result that none of the jobs can receive full attention." Some of his publicity work has been for the government. He describes himself humorously as "a man of action, waiting." He numbers among his close friends such artists as Goeritz and Tamayo; and in New York, where he has an apartment, the composers Samuel Barber and Gian-Carlo Menotti. He spoke about the origins of Mexican

baroque, without dilettantism. He had not only read such authors as Mme. Calderón de la Barca and Graham Greene but could quote them. He asked me whether I had read Greene's *Lawless Roads*, and I told him it was next on my list.

"Mexicans who resent that book," he said, "delude themselves by believing that Greene's visit was paid for either by the Catholic Church or British capital. Do you know why Greene really came here? He came because his wife, who was ghosting a review for him in a London magazine, suggested that the scene in which Shirley Temple gets spanked in 'The Little Colonel' appealed to a kind of public sexual perversion. The producers threatened to sue and Greene was advised to absent himself for a while.

"Greene's failure in that book," Lasalle added, "as in most of his other books, is his inability to keep his subjective preoccupations from coloring what he observes. His observation about friendliness in Mexico being skin deep, for instance, is only partly true. Here's a case in point. The other day I offered to get a friend who needed them three Air France tickets to Paris. As soon as he'd left, I realized that I couldn't possibly get them, *and I knew he knew it.* Greene would say 'insincerity,' but the thing is *that when I said it, I meant it.*"

I asked him to define the differences between the three big powers in current Mexican politics, ex-Presidents Cárdenas and Alemán and President Ruiz Cortines. He differentiated them this way.

"Once, near Reynoso, Cárdenas, who really does love the Indian and is always trying to help him, was approached by a group of them who wanted land. (This was during his presidency, of course.) Cárdenas gestured ahead of him, where an unfarmed tract lay. 'Give them this!' he said to his aide. 'Sorry, Mr. President,' the aide replied, 'but it seems that our motorcade has passed over the border. That land is part of the United States!'

"Alemán was the first civilian president, and, as such, great things were expected of him. Unfortunately, his brains and financial acumen undid him. We learned quickly that the old-time general, with his pistols, his *tequila* and his whores, was less costly to Mexico than the new 'administrator type' with his

flowered shirts, his imported whiskey, and his water skis. One could almost look back nostalgically at the *New Yorker* cartoon of the tourist saying to the peon who is standing over another peon: 'Siesta time?' 'Hell, no, he's dead!'

"Alemán accomplished so much in building and public works because he always had his personal interest. The Old Man [Ruiz Cortines] wants to see the plans and specifications of every new project, which doesn't entirely eliminate graft but slows construction. The result is that the whole economy has slowed up. The next step has got to be a rational approach to foreign investment. Up to now, our economy has been like Topsy—she just growed. Perhaps our next president—Lopez Matéos, our very intelligent Secretary of Labor, in my opinion[1] —will undertake that job."

January 28

Maria Douglas is considered by many to be the most gifted actress in Mexico, though I had heard it said that because of her un-Mexican family name there is what amounts to a conspiracy to keep her from becoming another Dolores del Rio or Maria Felix.

I called on her at her apartment near Chapultepec and asked if this was true. Her beautiful, extraordinarily mobile face clouded fleetingly before she smiled. "In a way, I suppose so. My father's family was English. The name, and the fact that I am blonde, leads many people to suspect that I'm American. I tried changing my name, but it was too late. And too silly. You can hear how poor my English accent is. If they want me," she added with a laugh, "they'll have to take me just as I am—a Mexican born just a few blocks from here on Avenida Chapultepec."

Her apartment is unpretentious, tastefully furnished. The paintings are all by young Mexican artists. She supports herself entirely by her acting—a few minor roles in Mexican films and many starring roles in the local theater where plays, she says, have very short runs and the houses rarely seat more than 200. Her biggest hits were in the roles of Claudel's Saint Joan and

[1] Lasalle's opinion was sound, for in 1957 Lopez Matéos became the candidate of the PRI—tantamount to election—and in 1958 Ruiz Cortines's successor.

Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire.* The Tennessee Williams play ran for three months—almost a record. She would like to break into the American stage, or films, but not live permanently away from Mexico.

I drove her to her rehearsal for a new play by the Mexican playwright Luisa Josefina Hernandez, *Los Frutos Caídos.* On the way, I asked her whether she found it possible to combine her life as an actress with the normal life of a Mexican woman. Quite impossible, she replied. "There are a few Mexican actresses who are married, but it doesn't really work. As for me—well, there was a point when I wanted very much to get married and I asked the man how it would be with him. He made it quite clear that I would have to be a typical Mexican wife—and being a typical Mexican wife is incompatible with having a career of any kind, as you probably know. So then and there I had to make my choice. I decided to devote my life to acting. It's not easy, in Mexico, where the stage is only beginning to develop beyond provincial lines and where there are so few native dramatists (and none as yet of outstanding talent), but I don't regret my decision. I love acting, and I have great confidence that the growing popular interest in the theater, even in the small towns, will eventually stimulate our good writers into learning to write effectively for the stage."

January 29

Tonight Don Demarest and I went to see *Chilam Balam,* a Mexican movie in technicolor based (to the point of total non-resemblance) on the famous sixteenth-century chronicle of pre-Conquest Mayan life of that name. Aside from some excellent shots of Chichen-Itzá, it was a depressingly improbable cowboys-and-Indians affair, with the Spaniards in the role of the cowboys, but the Indians, of course, the heroes.

One of the unsolved mysteries of Mexico is how the Mexicans, those great individualists who express their every passion and whim at a bullfight, will put up with one solid hour of commercials separating a double feature. We entered in the middle of this one, and even to sit through half of it was agony. Not a Mexican so much as shifted in his seat. They seemed to love it. A strip of "jokes" is the only bearable part. In one of these, to-

night, a man was having a physical check-up. Asked which side his heart was on, he pointed to the *right* side.

"What is your profession, sir?"

"I am a doctor in *seguro social*" (the notoriously inefficient but mammoth social-security administration). Roars of derisive laughter.

* * *

Our new apartment is only three blocks from the Cuauhtémoc Monument and the new Conrad Hilton Hotel, a dozen blocks from the Alameda, and miles from open country or even open lots; yet, all about tonight, *dozens of cocks* are answering the crow of one that is situated apparently right under our kitchen window!

10 CATHOLICS AND COMMUNISTS

First Talk with Vasconcelos—Graham Greene's Lawless Roads*—Carlos Merida's Complaint—Siqueiros: The Artist as Activist—Lombardo Toledano and Communism—Betty Kirk Defines Cárdenas' Position—Further Sidelights on Siqueiros and Vasconcelos—The Black and the White*

January 30

Called on José Vasconcelos who, as Obregón's Minister of Education in the early twenties, established Mexico's educational system and commissioned the first murals by Orozco, Rivera, and Siqueiros. He is best known today as a philosopher. He has also written a celebrated autobiography in four volumes. I had heard that since running unsuccessfully for the presidency against one of Calles's puppets in 1929, Vasconcelos had become embittered, extremely anti-American, and a convert to Roman Catholicism. (The United States had supplied Calles generously with arms, with which the dictator had dispersed the opponents of his virulent campaign against the Church.)

I found Vasconcelos a short, compact, rosy-cheeked, peppery old man—old only in respect to his close-cropped white hair and a degree of infirmity in walking. He was sitting in a frayed overcoat, a spotted vest, and a pair of uncreased black trousers with one button open. His office is in the barnlike Biblioteca de Mexico across from the Ciudadela, the midtown fortress from which the counterrevolution against Madero was conducted during the Ten Tragic Days of 1913.

Since Demarest was with me, and we both wanted to get Vasconcelos' slant on the role of Catholicism in Mexican history, I asked him his opinion of some of the key figures. "I haven't read your biography of Cortés," I said, "but I assume you take no stock in this current Cuauhtémoc cult."

He laughed. "It's a delicate subject here, you know! Once, when a statue to Cuauhtémoc was being erected, a reporter pinned me down for a statement, hoping for a scandal. All of us Mexicans have *some* Indian blood, you know, if only because an ancestor got confused in the dark and stumbled into the wrong room! I said to the reporter: 'Don't ask me that. I'm part Zapotec, and the Zapotecs were notoriously peace-loving, in deadly fear of the bloodthirsty Aztecs. As a good Zapotec, I'm still afraid of offending them.' But on another occasion, I answered a worthy professor this way: 'You know as well as I do that the Aztecs were cannibals. You also know that Cuauhtémoc was brought up by that branch of the Aztec priesthood that practiced pederasty. Now I ask you, my friend, would you want your son to be brought up in the worship of cannibalism and pederasty?' "

Turning to the early Catholic priests, Vasconcelos spoke highly of Bishop Zumárraga but was critical of Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, who spent his last years in Spain savagely indicting the Conquerors (and many of his fellow priests) for their treatment of the Indians. "Las Casas," he said, "was a romantic who became the instrument of a destructive and exaggerated hatred of Spain. He was a good man, with the best of motives, but not constructive. Though his cause—salvation of the Indians—was a great one, he operated in it like a modern newspaper man or agitator."

I wanted to ask him whether anticlericalism in Mexico dated back further than Juárez, but mention of the Father of Liberalism touched off a flood. I noted only this: "Maximilian was a kind and gentle man, a true aristocrat; and the way he sacrificed himself for what he believed in showed true heroism. Juárez was a small man, and a mean one. He has been built into his present stature by *liberalismo puro*—made in U.S.A."

Of himself, Vasconcelos frankly admitted: "I was anticlerical at the time of the Revolution because one had to be if one believed in humanity. The Church mistakenly sided with Huerta against Madero—just as, later in Venezuela, it was to side with the bloody dictator, Gomez. Rome justifies such tactics on the grounds that Catholicism can always afford to wait. They were actually pleased when Calles persecuted the Church, because they deemed it healthy to be persecuted and to produce martyrs

when all had been complacency and sloth. Rome often views these questions with a great coldness, like Machiavelli almost, but true Christianity can never be cold or deliberately sacrifice human lives for a possible future triumph.

"By the way," he added, "have you read Graham Greene's book[1] about Mexico under Calles?"

I changed the subject, determined this time to do so.

January 31

Spent the better part of the night reading *Lawless Roads,* Greene's travelogue of Tabasco and Chiapas, and feel as if I'd been dragged through the mud. Not the mud of Mexico, though there's plenty of that, and it was a lot stickier in 1937 (I was here then myself) than it is now, but the mud of a mind tortured by anxieties and hatreds. Far from being redeemed by its author's Catholicism, the book seems perverted by it. Like every other traveler, I suppose, Greene saw what he came prepared to see. In his case, religious persecution. God knows there was plenty of that in Cárdenas' Mexico—the legacy of Calles couldn't be obliterated in a decade—and much of it (Cárdenas' intention of giving the Church no chance to recapture its temporal power, the heavy-handed Marxist education, etc.) Cárdenas had no intention of destroying. But to see everything in Mexico in the light of Governor Garridos's Tabasco and the ruined churches left in the wake of that fanatical Calles henchman—well, to say the least, it's a strange commentary on the Christian virtues of humility and forgiveness Greene professes.

He sees nothing good in Mexico or the Mexicans, and he is as soured on the country from the moment he sights it across the Texas border as he is when he leaves it, mule sore, flea-bitten, and a prey to dysentery. In San Luis Potosí, he sees a cockfight. "That, I think, was the day I began to hate the Mexicans. . . . I went into the Templo del Carmen [and heard] a language I could understand—'*Ora pro nobis.*'" He won't even allow that the Mexican is cheerful. "There's something horribly immature about their cheerfulness; no sense of human responsibility; it is all one with the pistol-shot violence." Friendly, then? "No hope

[1] *Lawless Roads.* The American edition published by Viking Press is called *Another Mexico.*

anywhere; I have never been in a country where you are more aware all the time of hate. Friendship there is skin deep—a protective gesture. That notion of greeting that you see everywhere upon the street, the hands outstretched to press the other's arms, the semi-embrace—what is it but the motion of pinioning to keep the other man from his gun?" And then, one sentence later, "Cynicism, a distrust of men's motives, is the accepted ideology." Cynicism . . .

The book hasn't had the effect of turning me into an anti-Catholic. One has only to compare Greene's whines of self-pity, after a 48-hour boat ride from Veracruz to Campeche, with Bishop Zumárraga's self-sacrificing devotion to his faith and to the Indians after a *four months*' voyage to Veracruz from Spain in the 1530s: two of the four *Audiencia* envoys died of seasickness, and the 70-year-old prelate was bedridden for months after landing. The book has given me a momentary Anglophobia, though. Not to mention anti-intellectualism and distrust of neurotics. Greene's constant reading of Trollope and Cobbett; his "depression" in the "thin" atmosphere of Mexico City; his revulsion from the sexual and his comparison of all violent movements to "orgasms"; his constant complaint that the hotels are too old—or too new; his real hatred of people—middle-class people—as in his diatribe "A Dentist's Life"; his readiness to fall in with the upper-class nostalgia for the Good Old Days of the Díaz Dictatorship; his hatred of ruins, and mules, and even birds ("Where birds are concerned, I lose my reason"); his Anglophilia ("There was nothing in this country so beautiful as an English village.").

The only instance in which Greene comes close to seeing clearly the state of his own tortured spirit is when he remarks, off guard: "It seemed as if Mexico was something I couldn't shake off, like a state of mind." The only time he recognizes goodness in a fellow human being is when the poor aged peasant on a mountaintop in Chiapas gives up his only bed to him. Greene, the great Christian and humanitarian, takes it without a qualm! The only time he diagnoses (unconsciously) his own lack of charity is when he speaks—generalizing grandly on Mexico's dilemma—of "the dreary, hopeless failure of love."

How much healthier is the point of view, limited though it is

by a certain aristocratic condescension to the "lower orders," of Mme. Calderón de la Barca. Coming from England too, and into a time of far greater discomfort, cynicism, corruption, and lethargy, Fanny Calderón was a devout Catholic herself. But she came to learn, not to deplore or preach. Her reaction to all Mexicans—from the unprincipled Santa Anna to the lowliest *lépero* —was sympathetic. She is not as good a writer as Greene. She is often naive. But she accepts Mexico *from the heart*, without closing her eyes to its defects. She can deplore (in keeping with her background) the shiftlessness and inertia of the servants. She can be horrified at the prevalence of beggars, highway robbers, incompetent workmen, and venal politicians. She can shudder at the impassivity of the common citizen as *pronunciamentos* are made and revolutionaries fire at each other callously across the busiest square in the capital. But she recognizes Mexican men as among the most hospitable, friendly, and generous in the world. And as for Mexican women:

> In point of amiability and warmth of manner, I have met with no women who can possibly compete with those in Mexico, and it appears to me that women of all other countries will appear cold and stiff by comparison. To strangers this is an unfailing charm, and it is to be hoped that whatever advantages they may derive from their intercourse with foreigners, they may never lose this graceful cordiality, which forms so agreeable a contrast with English and American frigidity.

February 1

"Three months," Carlos Merida told me this afternoon, "I worked in University City without receiving a *peso*, and then Lazlo's boys (Siqueiros, O'Gorman, Rivera, and Chavez Morado) put an end to my commission altogether."

He laughed; not bitterly, for there is not a trace of egotism or hard feeling in the old Guatemalan painter who has lived most of his life in Mexico. More subtle and sophisticated in his art than any Mexican save Tamayo, Merida suffers (like Tamayo) from the indifference of the Mexican public. His paintings and mosaics command high prices (almost in Tamayo's bracket), but in São Paulo or Caracas, not here.

How was it, I asked him, that the supercapitalist government

of Miguel Alemán that built the University could take its esthetic orders from five leftists?

"*Novedades* is a conservative newspaper," he replied. "Why are its literary and art columns in charge of Fernando Benitez and others of his ilk? Mexico is very naive in such matters. If you are a strong nationalist and a good politician, neither communism nor any other extreme doctrine will be held against you. The important thing is to be (superficially) 'on the side of the Revolution.' "

"And the young artists?" I asked him. Merida is very deaf and didn't understand my question at first. His deep-set blue eyes turned to his wife, who translated it into Spanish for him.

"The young," he replied with a smile, "are the old! It is as I once heard Orozco say when they asked him the same question: 'The young? *I* am the young!' You see, the young in years are truly conservative today. What they care about is luxury and money. They don't want to experiment, or even *see* anything new. Do you think they have ever heard of Morris Graves? Or Robert Motherwell? Or Ben Nicholson? Orozco was very great because he was always experimenting, though he didn't deny his roots. Tamayo is not a 'French' painter as they say here: he is the most Mexican painter there is because his colors and his forms are the very essence of Mexican folk art carried to a high level of sophistication."

"Siqueiros is an inveterate experimenter, isn't he?" I challenged.

"And in the small pictures, Siqueiros' experiments bear fruit!"

"While in the big ones—?"

"What can one say about propaganda?" he replied with a tolerant shrug.

His wife turned to me and whispered, not too softly: "*No le gusta!*"

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Siqueiros' house is not far from Merida's, and I walked to it for a 5:00 o'clock appointment. The painter suggested that we drive out to the Hospital de la Raza in his car and have a look

at his most recent mural. "I've been away for months," he said, "in Europe, China, India, and I want to see it again myself."

On the way to the hospital he spoke enthusiastically about his recent trip. "The Buddhist cave murals at Tung Hueng and Yuan Kuang—one should call them communally integrated plastics rather than murals—are the greatest art I have ever seen, greater than the Gothic cathedrals. In front of them, I said to my hosts: 'If communism doesn't soon achieve a dynamic art comparable to this, then I'm afraid I'll have to become a Buddhist!' "

Chou En-lai had flown him to these inaccessible masterpieces in his own transport, Siqueiros said. And in India his plane had been met at the airport by Nehru and his entire cabinet. In his welcoming speech Nehru had said: "In Mexico, artists are more important than politicians. From now on, we are going to put the resources of the state behind art for public places because we want to justify our culture by producing artists of the stature of Siqueiros."

"Why is it," I asked Siqueiros, "that artists carry so much weight in your country that hardly a building can be put up without enlisting their collaboration?"

"Because," he answered, "we have had *power*—ever since the 1910 Revolution. We were never 'just artists.' We could, and did, *write*. We could address meetings. We organized—ourselves and others. When I led the strike at the Academy in my teens, our syndicate made two demands: 'Out with the Academicians!' and 'Nationalize the Railroads!' It was silly, of course, but it indicates our spirit. We weren't just thinking of ourselves. We could *fight*. Some of us became generals. I myself am still a reserve captain in the Mexican army and a lieutenant colonel in the army of Republican Spain. In the old days we went to paint with pistols in our belts. They couldn't have stopped us if they'd wanted to! Vasconcelos has been given much of the credit for the renaissance. We *forced* him to tolerate us. He hated our murals as soon as he saw them. As for Dr. Atl, he helped us technically in the beginning, but we never took him seriously as a painter."

When we got to the hospital, the theater was closed, so we made a date to look at the murals together later.

February 2

Vicente Lombardo Toledano, the fire-throated labor leader of the thirties whose speeches gave Cárdenas the left-wing "incentive" for his nationalization of oil and for his *ejidos*, is now in his sixties. He is an intellectual, but a tough one. He has iron-gray eyes with drooping eyelids that reveal little of his feelings, and a deeply creased face. He was sitting in the inner office of the Latin-American Labor Federation, an organization which, judging by the fact that no one came in or called during the hour I was with him, is probably a "front." Lombardo Toledano is widely believed to be the top Communist of Mexico. To me he denied that he was or ever had been a Party member—"I am a Marxist, certainly, and the Communists supported me when I ran for the presidency in 1952 against Ruiz Cortines, but they are a very small group here."

"Did Cárdenas support you?" I asked. "And will he support you if you run again next year, as I've heard you may?"

"Cárdenas didn't support any of the three candidates last time—the third, Henriques, was a mere racketeer—but he did speak from the same platform with me during a meeting I addressed in Michoacán, which is something he did for neither of the other candidates. I have no idea whether the Popular Party will choose me to run again, or whether Cárdenas will take a stand this time. I can tell you this, though: Cárdenas and I are working for the same objective—a genuine party of the masses which will be permitted to operate legally and honestly."

"How many votes did you get in 1952?" I asked.

He laughed. "The police of Ruiz Cortines' party collected the ballot boxes and 'counted' the vote. They announced that I had a hundred thousand. The most conservative estimate of the number I really had is a million."

On the wall directly behind the labor leader's desk were three portraits: Morelos, Juárez, and Zapata—"the three great Mexicans," Lombardo remarked—and further down a big drawing by Siqueiros symbolizing the expropriation of oil. I asked him if he would review the events of the Revolution in terms of their bearing on the painting renaissance. His English is fairly good, but he preferred to speak in French.

"For any good art to develop," he began, "there must be an *élan* of the masses. We had that *élan* from 1910 to 1924. When it subsided the art subsided with it. Madero was an *homme illuminé*, but a liberal who saw everything in political rather than economic terms. The great figures of the Revolution were Zapata and Villa."

"Pancho Villa?" I said. "I thought Villa was a bandit."

"Villa is much underestimated abroad. He was a great guerrilla commander and a man of the masses who understood instinctively what the masses wanted. His great accomplishment was to destroy the European professional army of Díaz which had no roots in the people. To replace it, he created a popular army. Obregón was a petty bourgeois, like Carranza and the others who followed, but Obregón is important for having been the first to put the Constitution of 1917 into effect. Calles continued this policy during his first administration; I don't need to tell you what he did during his second. The renaissance took place under Obregón (1922-1928), but Obregón had no cultural program. He left that in the hands of Vasconcelos, about whom he knew nothing except that he had been recommended to him for Minister of Education because he was a famous intellectual who had supported the Revolution.

"Vasconcelos was a man of culture, ambition, and great *inquiétude* who knew very little about education and nothing at all about art—remember that art, at any rate artists, had had no status in Mexico since the Aztecs—and he came to me for advice. I was then Director of the National Preparatory School. I proposed the rural education and Indian regeneration programs, which Vasconcelos then set in motion. He had already commissioned Diego Rivera, who was just back from almost twenty years in Paris, to paint his first mural in my school. This mural, 'The Creation,' was neither revolutionary nor Mexican. Vasconcelos suggested that I explain to Diego what these things meant. I advised Diego to travel *in Mexico*, which he did, spending a great deal of time with Felipe Carillo Puerto in Yucatán. When he returned, he painted his masterpieces, the Ministry of Education frescoes and Chapingo, as you know. Meanwhile Vasconcelos announced that he was tired of murals and artists, and that there would be no further commissions from his depart-

ment. I therefore invited Orozco, Siqueiros, and the others to finish the decoration of the walls of my school, putting up the funds from my own budget, and when that didn't suffice, out of my salary.

"The crisis in art follows the crisis in the Revolution. When the Revolution was arrested, during Calles's second period, art was arrested."

"Tamayo continued to grow—"

"The only thing Mexican about Tamayo is his color. I don't know what the rest of it is, but it is neither Mexican nor revolutionary."

"So that was the end?"

"No, not the end. The Revolution revived, under Cárdenas; then it subsided again. But the end is not yet."

"You see another revolutionary upsurge coming?" I asked.

"It is possible. We may even see it next year, with the election. The masses have about reached the end of their patience. You must understand that the Mexican psychology is different from any other. The masses here *seem* to accept misery without complaint. But one day this pent-up violence will create another explosion. History proves that these explosions represent the real temper of the people. Everything was *very quiet* before 1810, before 1860, before 1910. In Cuba, by contrast, politics is being forever *debated.* Here, never! If you argue with a man in Mexico, he will pretend to agree, be very polite, and then—perhaps seeming to change his mind—he will whip out his gun and shoot you!" Shades of Graham Greene!

February 3

Lombardo Toledano had whetted my curiosity to know more about Cárdenas. I called on Betty Kirk, the correspondent of the London *Times* and author of a well-documented book on the Cárdenas period. She told me that Professor Frank Tannenbaum is probably Cárdenas' closest American friend and that whenever he comes to Mexico, Cárdenas drops everything to see him. On one occasion he invited the American author to have lunch with him at his home in Jiquilpan. After several hours' talk, Cárdenas told the American to get in touch with him if anything had been unclear. Tannenbaum called him in Jiquil-

pan the following day, only to find that the former President was in Mexico City a few blocks from his own hotel!

"And is the reason he moves about this way, with such secrecy that he can't offer his best friend a ride," I said, "because he fears assassination?"

"Whatever the reason," Betty Kirk said, "think of the number of people who'd be delighted to see him out of the way!"

"He's that powerful still?"

"More powerful than ever," she replied. "Everyone knows that one word from Cárdenas could touch off a revolution in Mexico—and a revolution that would succeed. But why should he want to? No Mexican today wants a return to civil war, for they have already paid for their freedom with a million dead. So long as private interests, on *both* sides of the border, keep their hands off the nationalized industry, which is the key to the extraordinary development you have seen here, there will be peace in Mexico."

"What dangers does he foresee?"

"That with the Republicans in power in the United States, the oil companies might get the nod to move back in. Yet, even under the Alemán administration, which was very friendly to North American capital, negotiations for a possible compromise broke down because the terms offered by the oil interests were unacceptable to Mexico."

I told her that I'd heard Cárdenas criticized from the left for his role in dictating compromise electoral candidates. "Is the PRI the *only* party in Mexico? Do the other parties amount to nothing?"

"They have their followings," she said, "but what people fail to realize is that in the present stage of Mexico's development, a multiplicity of *effective* parties might mean total chaos. The PRI enforces order, but at the same time, in a sense, it's a three-party system. What could be more divergent than Alemán's clearly capitalist interests on one wing and Cárdenas' social-democratic philosophy with its strong appeal to the masses on the other? Ruiz Cortines, whose strength should not be underestimated, forms the Center. This effective balance of conflicting interests within one party is the secret of Mexico's stability and progress over the past two decades. The PRI is so constituted

that it *has* to be sensitive to any rumblings of discontent. Sooner or later the worst abuses are corrected—else Right or Left would dominate!"

"Then you feel that Cárdenas is a social democrat and not, as many insist, a Communist."

"Of course. The Mexican Communists hate Cárdenas, but they don't say so—they fear too much his hold over the people. Look at his record. Would a Communist ever have invited Trotsky to Mexico? Or denounced his assassins as Cárdenas did? When he was President, Cárdenas realized that an effective labor movement had to be built to replace the old Morones structure that was rotten with corruption and racketeering; and he saw that Lombardo Toledano was the only man who could do this. But just as soon as Lombardo's power began to become excessive—that is, when he tried to organize the civil servants and agricultural workers—Cárdenas put his foot down, and Lombardo was through."

"And the Stalin Peace Prize?"

"For two years Cárdenas rejected it. His decision to accept came only after the Geneva Summit meeting and Eisenhower's friendly gestures toward Khrushchev. Apparently Cárdenas thought that if coexistence was a reality he would play his part too. He may also have felt that after our Guatemalan 'Victory,' which he had publicly protested, a reminder that Mexico is an independent country would not be amiss."

February 4

An example of the totally different attitude toward communism and the Communists here and at home. Phil Stein, who once worked as Siqueiros's assistant, told me at lunch today that some years ago, when he was trying to get his working immigration papers, Siqueiros had helped him by going around to the various government bureaus with him. It was during the Alemán administration, and Ruiz Cortines was head of one of these departments. Entering his office, the soon-to-be President noticed Siqueiros sitting in the antechamber. Siqueiros showed no sign of recognition. The Minister was hurt. He stepped up to the artist. "Don't you recognize me, Siqueiros? Such-and-such a battalion during the Revolution? We were comrades." Siquei-

ros did remember now, and they embraced with emotion. Later, when Siqueiros was working on the Bellas Artes murals, Ruiz Cortines, by that time President, would often come by to see how the work was progressing and they would embrace with just as much fervor.

February 5

"In my Department of Education days," Vasconcelos confided this morning, "I was a Tolstoyan Christian Socialist. I had been a Catholic, but broke with the Church over its support of the Rightist dictator Huerta. I attacked clericalism, but never the dogmas. I had started by believing essentially in the Lord's Prayer, and it's to that that I've finally returned, after making all the philosophic sidetrips. I give them back Free Will. I don't want it. Like the Jesuits, I say to the Lord: 'Tell me what to do.' I'm *not* a convert; I don't believe in conversion as the Protestants understand it. I never lost my faith in the supernatural. I admire Bergson, the idol of my youth, who ended a Catholic, though a private one, because he was noble enough not to want to desert his persecuted Jewish brethren. Protestants, Bergson used to say, lack the communion of the saints, in whose good works all of us can participate."

"How strong is the Church in Mexico today?" I asked him.

"Very strong in terms of sentiment and indirect influence, but politically impotent. Its former political power has been taken over entirely by the Masons, who control education, the Army, and just about every other institution in Mexico. Obregón only became a Mason after he had the power, but Calles was a high Mason, and Cárdenas is one, and Alemán—who has no religion but money—had to become one to achieve the presidency. To rise above a lieutenant colonel in the Army, you have to join a lodge."

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At dinner, Goeritz confessed that his political philosophy was "an incurable liberalism."

"I want everybody," he said, "to be as free as I am to do and say what they believe in. Here in Mexico that is an incomprehensible and inexcusable position. You must be either black

or white, reactionary or red. Everyone here respects Lombardo Toledano and Siqueiros, the No. 1 and No. 2 Marxists. And everyone respects the leading Catholics by the same token. But anyone like me, who believes in workers' rights and a degree of socialism on the one hand, and in God above particular churches and creeds on the other, is regarded with contempt and suspicion. As soon as I'd arrived and become fairly well known as a sculptor, a Communist architect friend approached me; if I joined the Party, he pointed out, I'd get important commissions. This was in the wake of 'El Eco.' Diego was still friendly then. But when I declined the invitation, their attacks began. Another friend asked me once: 'Why don't you become a Catholic?' He, too, felt sure that all sorts of architectural and sculptural jobs would fall my way. I declined for the same reasons. In Europe or the United States, advantages might accrue from one's acceptance of an organized faith, but this sort of open pressure would never be exerted."

11 THE REVOLUTIONISTS

An Old Revolutionist Sums Up—Another View of Cárdenas—General Reyes' Son—Francisco I. Madero: Hero of Humanity—Orozco: The Artist as Revolutionary—Anita Brenner and Dr. Carillo Gil on Orozco—Hidalgo at Las Cruces

February 6

As I was driving to an 11:00 o'clock appointment with Vasconcelos at the Ciudadela this morning, I had occasion to stop at one of the higher office buildings where my camera was being repaired. There was an excellent view of the city from the waiting room. I tried to picture it as it was during the Ten Tragic Days of 1913.

The Paseo de la Reforma, one of the noblest avenues in the world, stretches from beyond Chapultepec Castle to the statue of Charles IV (El Caballito) in the circle from which Avenida Juárez starts. Juárez, after passing the park of the Alameda and the Bellas Artes museum, narrows into the street now named after Francisco I. Madero. This in turn leads to the Zócalo, the plaza of Aztec Tenochtitlán, which now contains the Cathedral and the Government Palace. The Paseo, Maximilian's principal legacy to Mexico, embellished later with rows of diminutive statues and fountains by Porfirio Díaz, is as it was.

When the conspiracy, hatched by General Reyes and Díaz's nephew Felix, began, Madero was in Chapultepec Castle and the conspirators had seized the Government Palace in the Zócalo. Disdaining the danger, Madero summoned his household and guard, mounted, and rode down the Paseo as far as the Caballito. Meanwhile loyal forces under General Villar recaptured the Government Palace, killing General Reyes. The conspirators holed up in the Ciudadela, a few blocks to the south of the point

where Madero was waiting. Unfortunately Madero at this juncture made his great mistake: he replaced the wounded Villar with Victoriano Huerta, although the President's more realistic brother, Gustavo Madero, had warned him that Huerta was not to be trusted.

During the ten days that followed, the city became a battlefield. Cannon and machine-gun fire raked the area between the Zócalo and the Ciudadela. All stores closed down. Electrical and gas services were knocked out, turning the darkness into a nightmare of fires and looting. Piles of bodies were burned in the streets to try to check the epidemics already raging. And through it all, Huerta would slink out of the Palace for his clandestine meetings with Felix Díaz at the pastry shop El Globo and then report back to Henry Lane Wilson, the infamous American Ambassador who was pulling every wire at his command to bring the Government, the Revolution, and Madero down in ruin. How well he succeeded, the walls along Balderas and Arcos de Belem, still chipped and bullet-pocked from that murderous crossfire, do not tell. But no Mexican has forgotten the lesson. The hundreds of thousands of wildly cheering citizens who jammed the approaches to the Zócalo in 1937 to cheer Cárdenas and Lombardo Toledano for their expropriation of the American oil properties were not cheering for cheaper gasoline.

When I arrived at the Ciudadela with my camera, Vasconcelos was waiting for me. Taking me out into the courtyard, he said, "This hallowed spot should be as good a place to stand for the photograph as any." It was exactly here, he explained, where a statue of Morelos once stood, that the triumphant conspirators had thrown Gustavo Madero to the mob, picking out his one good eye with a sword's point, shattering his lower jaw amid jeers, and finally burning the body. The President and Vice President were murdered later.

I was glad to hear the old man affirm that Madero was the greatest figure of the Revolution. Gustavo, he added, had been equally maligned by posterity. But Vasconcelos' charge that "the Guggenheims, the Rockefellers, and the Pierson interests were ultimately responsible for Madero's fall" I took with a grain of salt. They played their parts, but this was an oversimplification. I mentioned Dr. Atl's adverse comment on

Madero. "Atl," Vasconcelos observed dryly, "was in Paris with Diego Rivera at the time, both of them recipients of scholarships —from Porfirio Díaz."

I asked Vasconcelos why he had retired from politics.

"In 1925, when Obregón turned over the power to Calles, many of the army leaders wanted free elections. Calles had them shot. I went into exile for the five years that followed. I came back to run for the presidency in 1929, hoping to end the bloodshed, but failed. Calles originated the school of politicians who have ruled (and ruined) Mexico ever since—the kind that makes millions out of politics and further impoverishes the country by putting the money in American banks. Cárdenas, make no mistake, was one of the worst. He still is. The government pays him 90,000,000 *pesos* a year to use for irrigation in Michoacán. Is it any wonder that he is one of the richest men in Mexico? He gives no accounting of that money at all. Nor does he pay any attention to the engineers—draining this lake, diverting that river, as it suits his fancy. He's crazy with power!"

February 7

Called on Alfonso Reyes, the patriarchal Mexican man of letters, with Antonio Souza. Reyes was at his desk on the balcony of his library, which he is now cataloguing for ultimate presentation to his native city of Monterrey. It contains 30,000 volumes and is said to be the finest in Mexico. Observing a miniature of Sor (Sister) Juana Inés de la Cruz on one of the cases, I was reminded of the fact that that foremost of Colonial Mexican poets herself collected 4,000 volumes in her Jeronymite cell—the largest library, it is reputed, of that period.

Sor Juana was the great revolutionary of Colonial Mexico—no less so for the fact that, like Hidalgo a hundred years later, she "recanted." Though she didn't die before a firing squad, she gave up her precious books and poems and wrote two protestations of faith in her own blood. Her life as a revolutionary had been short. An illegitimate child and an infant prodigy, Sor Juana had dazzled the literary salons of the capital with her brilliance. She became a nun because her status in society, both as a writer and as a woman, had been humiliating: challenged in the convent to justify her insatiable intellectual curiosity, she had

made an epoch-making defense of women's rights. When finally she submitted, the human spirit in Mexico slumbered for a century.

Reyes is a short, plump man in his seventies with a pointed white beard. For some reason he reminded me of the French doctor in the famously banal nineteenth-century picture. He was affable, and we talked of everything from Cuauhtémoc (whom Reyes compared to Turnus, the Latin King who resisted Aeneas unsuccessfully), to Goethe, Rubén Darío and Supervielle, his favorite poets. Among the younger Mexicans, Reyes singled out Carlos Pellicér, Octavio Paz, and Gorostiza for particular praise.

The interesting part of our talk came, however, just as we were about to leave. I noticed a photograph of a distinguished, white-bearded gentleman and asked Reyes who it was. It was his father, he replied, who had been a general. I realized at once that this must have been the famous officer who had been War Minister under Porfirio Díaz, joined with Felix Díaz in the conspiracy against Madero, and been shot as he approached the National Palace at the head of his troops.

Reyes confessed to us that only in the last two years has he felt free to talk frankly about the events of the Ten Tragic Days. I asked him why. It seems that his brother Rodolfo, who had been the old general's political adviser, had lived in Madrid, dying there two years ago. It was this brother who had counseled their father to turn against the Revolution.

"It was bad advice," Reyes said, "not only because it resulted in my father's death but because Madero was the constitutionally elected President and represented the Mexican people's will to freedom.

"My father," he added, "was the most liberal of state governors under the Díaz dictatorship. In Monterrey he sponsored the most advanced social legislation of his time. He was ill-advised to rebel, though his motives were idealistic."

He described the scene at the Palace in 1913. His father had advanced from the Ciudadela while Felix Díaz was approaching from Tacuba. "My father got off his white horse and approached the gates with outstretched arms. He wanted a conference with the President. General Villar didn't give the order

to fire; in fact he shouted to my father not to advance. But a noncommissioned officer opened up with his machine gun and my father fell. Villar, when he saw what had happened, broke a pane of glass with his elbow and rubbed his hands against the edges until they were covered with blood. He never took part in public life again. As for Victoriano Huerta, who was shortly to murder Madero and become dictator, he would never even have been *heard* of had my father lived. Huerta was a protégé of my father in Monterrey; he feared and worshiped him. My father would never have permitted harm to come to the Maderos; nor would he have permitted Huerta, by that time an incurable drunkard and incompetent, to rule."

"How old were you at the time?" I asked.

"I was twenty-four," Reyes answered. "I accepted a post in the legation in Paris, remaining there with my wife and two children until Carranza ousted Huerta, at which point all the foreign-service appointees were dismissed and I had to go to Madrid, where I lived by my pen for the next five years. It was during that period in Paris and Madrid that I got to know Diego Rivera well. Did you know that he is as much a poet with words as with paint?"

I said that I knew Diego was a clever writer.

"He was more than clever. He actually dictated to Ilya Ehrenbourg his first novel, the novel that made Ehrenbourg's reputation."

* * *

The trail of 1913 had not come to an end. Chancing to have lunch at Sanborn's with a lawyer named Ovando, I was told that his father's close friend, one Virgilio Villanueva, was the doctor who had warned Madero in advance of the plot against his regime and urged him to escape while there was still time. Madero had indignantly refused. This same doctor performed the autopsy on the President's bullet-riddled body a few days later. "I can show you the report if you like," Ovando said.

How intimately great events are connected among a few families in Mexico!

Antonio Souza remarked casually as we were driving down

the Paseo this morning (when I told him I was going to Guadalajara soon) that his great-great-grandfather on his mother's side designed and built Orozco's Hospicio dome.

February 8

I've been reading Stanley R. Ross's *Madero* and Leslie Bird Simpson's *Many Mexicos*. The latter book has been praised by several critics for its "tough-mindedness." Simpson is the kind of writer who echoes Dr. Atl's opinion of the Maderos of this world—though without Atl's consistency, Simpson professing to be a liberal. To this school of thought, history is a confrontation of hard-headed realists and hopeless romantics. Madero is ridiculed for his "squeaky voice and lack of biceps" (a Fascist attitude that I feel sure Atl would disdain to take). In Texas, Simpson says, "nobody seemed to pay much attention to him [Madero] and, after a laughable fiasco, he gave his revolution up as a bad job and set out for Europe." That is the kind of historical writing which, while it cannot be disproved in specific detail, adds up to an untruth. Then he says that Villa and Pascual Orozco "pushed Madero aside and took Ciudad Juárez by storm"—which again is at variance with the facts, completely ignoring Madero's fantastic courage and Christian consistency in saving the life of Federal General Navarro at the risk of his own. The power "behind" Madero (there is always somebody "behind" an idealist in the view of these "realists"—until he starts losing) was Madero's brother Gustavo who, Simpson says, "got together a small army of gangsters" while Madero's other relatives "got on the bandwagon." (The word "gangster" is the left-wing professor's synonym for friends, when he despises the person who has them.)

Ross, in his thoroughly documented and objective study of Madero's regime, disposes of this canard. The truth is that Madero tried for years to get his relatives to interest themselves (against their economic interests, as he was doing) in overthrowing the Díaz dictatorship and, until they consented to his actions, refused to endanger them by fully committing himself. Worst of all, in Simpson's eyes, "Madero showed his ignorance of Mexican history by asking Huerta to account for the million

pesos given him to finance the campaign [against Zapata]." His final distortion of the truth is that Mexico under Madero "suffered from as corrupt and expensive a regime as that of Díaz"!

Simpson's hero, of course, is Obregón, whom he describes as "intelligent, practical and hard-minded." Then he adds, revealingly, "Revolutionary theories were not to him a religion, but could be trimmed to fit the occasion." Like the Marxists ("tough-minded liberals" resemble the Marxists in more ways than this), Simpson has nothing but praise for the simple man of action, Zapata. The Zapata worship in Mexico is only a shade less phony than the Cuauhtémoc worship. In the most charitable interpretation, Zapata was a leader of the dispossessed; in the least charitable, of the bandits of Morelos and Guerrero. Within the context of conditions in those two states and of his own primitive background, Zapata acted with admirable consistency and valor.

The real hero of the Mexican Revolution is Madero. The others, with their sanctioning of various forms of social extermination, only did the obvious in terms of self-interest. Madero alone acted *against* his personal interests, believing in the rights of all men, and in principle. As the son of a millionaire *hacendado,* he had every reason to support Díaz and the status quo. As the leader of the Revolution, he had every interest in executing his enemies—which he consistently refused to do. As a politician, he would have remained in power indefinitely had he brushed aside constitutional government and given the Zapatistas what they demanded without legal procedure. But as a genuine democrat, Madero had to oppose the extremism of *both* Zapata and Huerta. His downfall and death have all the elements of Greek tragedy. Fate (the times, Mexico's immaturity) overcame him. Morelos and Juárez had as much integrity, but the one was cruel and the other righteous. Madero is of the order of Lincoln and Gandhi. Only Cárdenas, among contemporary Mexicans, is of the same stature, but there is a Puritan streak in Cárdenas that chills one, and though he seems to have accomplished more, it must be remembered that his task, coming after the ideological preparation and with the threat of imperialist intervention from the North removed, was comparatively easy.

February 9

It is part of the nature of the truly great man that his personality is complex, mysterious, endlessly controversial. Witness the thousands of books about Goethe and Lincoln within a century of their deaths. Critics are still debating whether Beethoven was obsessed by God or completely immoral. And just as Mexicans still cannot agree whether Madero was an idiot or a saint, so one of Orozco's admirers will insist that the artist was the soul of human consideration and another that he was a Nazi. Only on the point of his having been a revolutionary in his art is there any agreement.

On the way to have a second look at the frescoes in the Preparatory School and the Templo de Jesus and to pay a call on Dr. Carillo Gil, who has most of the great easel pictures in his collection, I thought of the conflicting opinions of Orozco's friends. Anita Brenner, with whom Don Demarest and I had lunch a few days ago, gives an account of the Preparatory School completely at variance with Lombardo Toledano's—and Vasconcelos'.

* * *

"Vasconcelos," she told us, "invited the painters to the Preparatoria. After the first panels on the ground floor had been completed, the storm broke. Either because of the opposition or because the money gave out, the work stopped. I was only a would-be journalist of eighteen at the time, but I decided that only a big press campaign could save the situation. With the aid of a Mexican journalist who also believed in Orozco, the campaign was launched. We spoke of Orozco's 'international reputation' and 'American réclame,' though at the time Orozco had never been heard of outside Mexico and didn't, in fact, become known in the United States until my book *Idols Behind Altars* was published there in 1930.

"It was I," Anita had continued, "who first suggested to Orozco that he use the Revolution as subject matter in his work. The series of Revolutionary sketches that followed his 'Maternity' allegory in the Preparatoria was the result of this suggestion and in turn led to the later murals there, such as 'The Trench'

and 'The Trinity.' In New York, when the work in the Preparatoria had been discontinued for good, Orozco was really down and out. I was there too. I helped him out financially. I had heard of Mme. Sikelianos and her Greek salon of mystics. It occurred to me that they might be interested in Orozco's genius. I knew Alma Reed and was aware that she was a member of that coterie. I introduced Orozco to her. It worked. I never dreamed that Orozco, coming out of the tough Mexico of the Revolution, would be taken in by mysticism, but for a time he was. Perhaps the sudden hero worship went to his head. It didn't matter. He painted Mme. Sikelianos' portrait. Alma arranged the commission at Pomona College in California, and later the Dartmouth one. But my own small part in the story was coming to a sudden end.

"I was arranging the first group show in New York of all the Mexican artists. When I went to Orozco for formal permission to include his pictures, he said to me, 'If Diego is included, count me out!' I explained that this show had nothing to do with personalities; could he deny that Diego was an artist? But Orozco was unyielding. So I had to go ahead and hold the show anyway, with whatever Orozcos I had. He never forgave me. Since I was both a foreigner (American) and a Jew, he seized on both these facts and slipped some pretty unpleasant notes under my door. I still have them. But the experience hasn't changed the affection I still feel for the man. Nor my conviction that he was a very great artist."

* * *

Siqueiros, on my first meeting with him, tended to confirm this view. Orozco's politics, he said, were not to be taken seriously. "If ten people were in a room and argued for something —anything—Orozco would take the opposite side. His tolerance for fascism stemmed from our adherence to communism, no more. Atl's championship of Mussolini was something else again, arising from the fact that Atl and Mussolini had been great friends in Lausanne at a time when the Italian had been a revolutionary socialist. Orozco's only 'constant' was his bitter hatred of anything having to do with religion. No one of the rest of us shared it—at least not in such a personal, virulent form. But it served him well in his art. Orozco *remained* a great artist,

by the way, because he never stopped inventing. The Hospicio dome is one of his last works, and his greatest."

* * *

Juan O'Gorman, the gentle hedonist and emotional nationalist, has a theory of his own. Orozco, as he sees it, is not a "people's painter" like Rivera or Renoir. He was not seeking to give pleasure through his art, "yet a degree of pleasure is generated, for this reason: *the necessity of being inefficient*, so evident in the Mexican temperament, is a vital ingredient of art itself. In Orozco, the whole emotion derives from this. You see —inefficiency produces pleasure!"

* * *

The frescoes on the lowest arcade of the Preparatory School date from 1923 and include the lyrical, Atl-inspired (and Botticelli-influenced) "Maternity," with its wind-blown drapery and golden-red tonality. There is also the so-called "Revolutionary Trinity"—though this was reworked in 1926 during the disillusioning Calles period—and a glorified cartoon strip entitled "The Rich Eat While the Workers Quarrel." All three figures in the "Trinity" are stupendous images, quite apart from their scale and exaggerated muscle. Could any other artist but Michelangelo have conceived such a figure as the man with his clasped hands covering his face, suggesting as it does both prayer and despair? Or the central giant, blinded by the red flag that whips across his face—so reminiscent of the Sistine "Creator"? The third figure is kneeling, not to pray, it seems, but to salute and be slave to the new gods; his broken nose and sullen brutality, part Indian, part Slav, complete the statement. "The Rich Banquet" and the mordant bit showing an emaciated hand dropping coins into a collection box from which (below) a fat, diamonded hand in a clerical sleeve receives them, are in Orozco's best vein of caricature.

There's a return to the touchingly simple, the truly monumental, in the central panel on the first floor. Its finest section, "Destruction of the Old Order," is Giottoesque in its restrained, perfectly harmonized lavenders and grays and in its balancing of

figures against stark landscapes; one of these, a pile of broken buildings, is wonderfully abstract, as it should be.

But the high point of Orozco's art (in so far as I've seen it) is the series of frescoes that adorn the stairwell. These, whatever the artist's politics, are affirmative and, whatever the artist's religious beliefs, the most profoundly *religious* mural painting since the fifteenth century. The Franciscan and Dominican friars are handled with just as much tenderness as the mutilated Indians they clasp to their breasts. Cortés, though he gently restrains Malinche from going to the aid of the slave at their feet, is more than a conqueror; he is a Biblical, at least legendary, hero, and quite as impressive as Michelangelo's "Prophets." The spread-eagled "Youth" really soars. The "Engineers" have the dignity of true builders.

On the third floor, "The Mother's Farewell" has pity as its theme rather than revolt or empire building. With the greatest economy of means the fatalism of the blind mother, the devotion of the son who kisses her hand, and the soldier who embraces his fainting wife against the receding angle of the pale-blue building, are the stuff of which great tragedy is made.

* * *

Orozco's work forms the backbone of the most important private collection of paintings in Mexico, that belonging to Dr. Alvár Carillo Gil (especially now that the Doctor has been feuding with Tamayo and dumped his seventy-five Tamayos on the market). Inés Amor, Mexico's best-known art dealer, took me to meet him. He lives in a modern house set in a garden behind a ten-foot wall in San Angel. A retired pediatrician, he still goes to his office mornings; in his spare time he paints rather handsome abstractions. He came to the door on the run. He is built like a middleweight wrestler and has a quick appreciation of all the arts from early Mayan sculpture to polished driftwood.

From his stacks, the collector brought out a parade of Orozcos. Water colors of prostitutes, dating back to 1911; an early oil in the manner of Lautrec or blue-period Picasso; a somber picture called "The Dead" in which five figures in black *rebozos* face a corpse with five other mourners in the foreground

seen from the back. I asked Inés Amor whether this picture could have been suggested by Goítia's famous "*Tata Jesucristo.*" She didn't think so. "Orozco hated Goítia. Once, at an exhibit of self-portraits, he stopped in front of Goítia's and I explained to him that, though unfinished, Goítia had worked on it five years and might continue another five. Orozco said: 'I think he's worked five years too long on it already.' I think he resented most Goítia's years of study in Europe, having himself made only a flying visit there very late in life to see the El Grecos."

Next, Dr. Carillo brought out a powerful, murderously satirical painting of Pancho Villa, obese, striding over a pile of naked Indians with a smoking revolver in one hand. A gouache of Zapatistas was the sketch for the Stephen Clark painting in New York. Finest of all was the "Combat" of 1930, with its massive white figures, one bayoneted through the back, against a serene blue sky. A 1944 picture entitled "Victory" depicts a cancerous hag with purple wings rising out of a river of blood; her only applauders are a group of skeletons, one of which is a self-portrait of the artist.

"Why was Orozco so bitter?" I asked. "Can it possibly be true, as Alma Reed claims, that he loved humanity?"

"Alma Reed," Inés Amor answered, "has woven a web of her own humanitarian fantasies over Orozco. It bears no relation to the man. He hated mankind, if ever a man did. You see that picture?" She pointed to a canvas of a dozen Indians dancing, their faces like apes'. "Well, he painted that to answer Diego's romantic idealization of the Indian. 'All Indians,' he used to say, 'are ugly.' Why was he bitter? Because of his life, his failures, his poverty, his obsessive inferiority complex. Toward the end of his life, I happened to take some tourists into one of the prostitution dens on San Juan de Letrán, hoping to see one of the theatricals they sometimes stage; there was Orozco, with a prostitute on his lap, laughing and having a wonderful time. His sense of inferiority with 'women of the better class' perhaps grew out of the injured arm and ugly appearance that sent him all through life to this kind of company for relaxation. Yet, as an artist Orozco was all of a piece, dedicated to his art and caring nothing at all for money. Tamayo has painted so few murals in Mexico because Mexico can rarely meet his prices

and because he has become starry-eyed with social adulation. Orozco painted many of his murals for nothing, and he cared still less what the critics and the rich—or the poor—thought of them."

* * *

Orozco's last important work, the frescoes in the vaulting of the Templo de Jesus, are likely to last longer than those in the Preparatory School. Though the Templo is one of the oldest churches in Mexico, almost no one seems to know where it is. Neither vandalism nor the weather is likely to cause the deterioration the older murals have suffered.

Knowing that these murals were painted during the war, when Orozco was at least pretending to be an admirer of Hitler, I may have read into them an overtone of sadism. The cool green, gray, and orange tonality is unpleasant, and the apocalyptic iconography is so cluttered with tangles of what look like tombstones and spaghetti as to be almost unreadable.

Justino Fernandez, Orozco's biographer, had helped Orozco study the text of the Apocalypse at the time the artist was working here, and thinks that familiarity with that text will lead to a greater appreciation of the artist's conception of God, Satan, and Man. He doesn't agree that the dominant mood is cruel. "Orozco is hard on God at the Day of Judgment," he told me, "because he felt that the punishments meted out to sinful men were too severe."

February 10

This Sunday was a beautiful day—even for Mexico City—cool, crisp, brilliant. So beautiful that, after a few sets of tennis at the French Club, we decided to drive to Las Cruces on the Toluca-Guadalajara road and have a picnic there.

It turned out to be exactly sixteen miles from Chapultepec Palace by my speedometer—surely not more than ten as the crow flies—and it was by this margin that Hidalgo, the patriot-priest, failed of his objective on the last day of October, 1810. The modest monument commemorating the battle is elusive. It lies a few hundred feet from the 10,000-foot-high pass affording the first view of the capital as one approaches it, the way

Hidalgo did, from Morelia (then called Valladolid). The inscription, dated 1852, reads that here Hidalgo, "the first *caudillo* of the Independence . . ." achieved "a glorious victory."

In a sense, he did. For at first the Spanish federals of Trujillo and Iturbide, numbering only 1,800 men, were thrown back by the huge *tumulto* of Aldama and Allende. These captains of Hidalgo held the pine-wooded slopes of the narrow defile till that point at 3:00 in the afternoon when the soldiers of their center, coming to within speaking distance of the royalist van, began to succeed in winning the latter over with revolutionary speeches. (The war for independence, in the minds of Hidalgo's dispossessed Indians, had long since become a social revolution.) Unfortunately for Hidalgo, Trujillo at this juncture gave the command to resume firing, and amid shouts of "Treachery!" the freedom fighters gave way sufficiently to permit the federals to fall back on the capital.

Why, with the way open before him, and close to a hundred thousand armed men at his command, Hidalgo failed to advance further, is still debated. Allende begged him to advance. Instead, he remained where he was until November 6, at which time Calleja, the brilliant loyalist generalissimo, was able to march down from Querétaro and intercept the revolutionaries' rearguard. It is argued in Hidalgo's favor that his losses in the battle (2,000), though proportionately much less than Trujillo's, robbed him of most of his effectives, and that the capital's defenses were therefore beyond his capacity to attack. This is a weak argument. Surely the revolutionary tide would have swept everything before it in the city. The Viceroy was already preparing to flee. The city mob would have forced him to. And from that point on, Calleja himself would have been faced with desertions.

But history was repeating itself. Moctezuma, with all his host, gave way to Cortés with his battalion, not so much because faced (as the military historians always claim) with superior firepower as because the "gods" had deserted him and he was already psychologically beaten. Could one oppose Quetzalcoatl? Here, at Las Cruces, Hidalgo had heard that the destiny of the colony had been placed by the Viceroy in charge of Our Lady of Remedies. Could one oppose the Virgin? Were not the

Church and the State indissoluble? Hesitating, Hidalgo lost his chance.

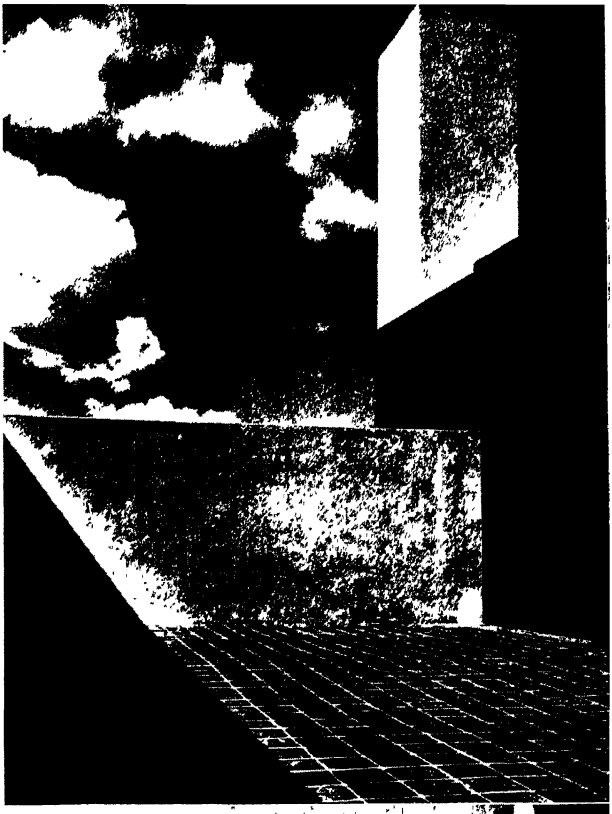
I thought, as I watched the crowd of middle-class Mexicans picnicking among the artificial rivulets and trout basins that now grace the forbidding defile, the stubborn muleteer Morelos would not have turned back. But by the time the brilliant Morelos had disciplined a small band of guerrillas in the West, fortune had temporarily forsaken the revolution. Morelos was able to accomplish no more than a series of textbook delaying actions in the mountains between here and Acapulco before the ambitious Lieutenant Iturbide managed to turn the independence movement to his own account and crown himself Emperor.

Hidalgo's vanity and dogmatism led to his downfall. His head full of libertarian doctrine, he believed in the power of the masses—since they believed in *him*. As soon as he began to suffer reverses, the ruthlessness that he had shown at San Miguel, at the Alhóndiga, and at Valladolid began to prey on his conscience. God was punishing him for his pride! The thin layer of French Revolutionary confidence left him. He was a priest again—and a wayward priest who must pay for his sins of rebelliousness and his lack of humility. The tragic dénouement of Chihuahua and of his anguished recantation was at hand.

What a man, though, what a hero old Hidalgo was! First with his prohibited silkworms and bees and forbidden books and illegitimate children; dancing and playing cards, defying the Old Order quite openly; and then in the pulpit at Dolores, dressed not in his vestments but in his street clothes, giving the famous *grito* and raising aloft the Virgin of Guadalupe as his battle standard. I could see him standing on this huge rock (he *must* have stood on it!) that now supports the commemorative obelisk, haranguing the poorly armed and clothed Indians, wearing his long blue coat with red cuffs bordered with silver galloon. For that moment, at least, he was more than the Generalissimo —he was Christ's Vicar on Earth! And it was in this spirit that he replied to the charges of the Holy Office two weeks later in Valladolid:

> I am accused of denying the existence of Hell, and at the same time affirming that some Pope is in that place. How can one deny the existence of Hell and yet say that a Pope is in it?

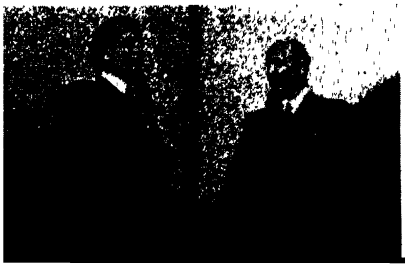
But greater than Hidalgo the logician, or Hidalgo the revolutionist, was Hidalgo the humanitarian, with courage and serenity (at the final scene) to match his humanity. He *had* sinned. He *had* shown pride in the righteousness of his position. He *had* carried off two million dollars in silver bars and coin. He *had* given orders for the massacres and reprisals. But—he had been, for all that, on Christ's side, the side of the poor and the oppressed, of the Indian. It was this certainty, surely, that sustained him in the days that followed his recantation. It was this that brought peace to his spirit as he made the last request—candy for the firing squad—and the sublime gesture of placing his hand upon his heart, both to make clear the target and to receive there one of the stigmata of his Lord.

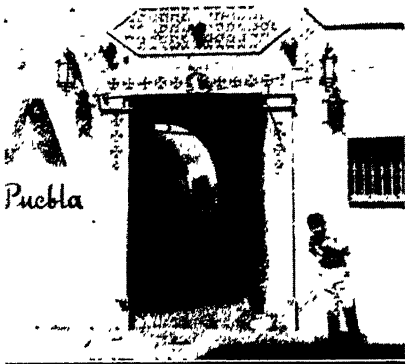


Barragán's home.

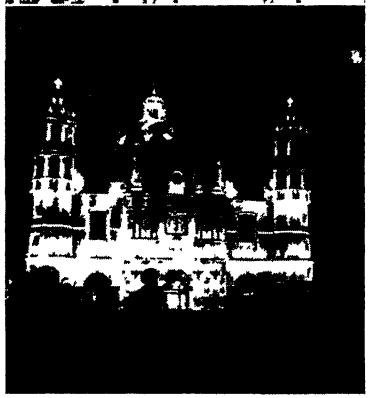
"Writing" on El Eco's wall

Mathias Goeritz and Luis Barragán.



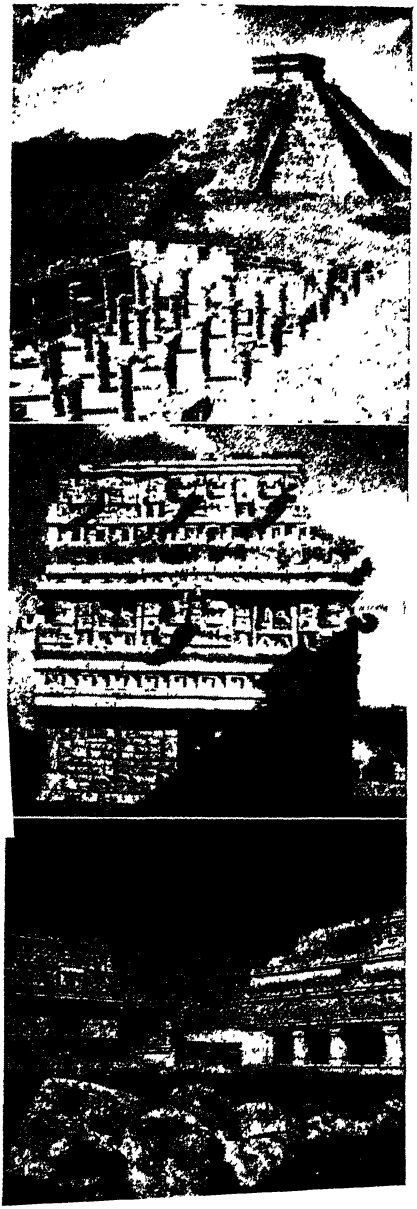


(*top to bottom*) Quetzalcoatl head, Teotihuacán. Puebla, city of tiles. Anchors, San Juan de Ulua



(*top to bottom*) Restored fresco, Teotihuacán. Bird effigy, Cholula. Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Tepeyac.

(*top to bottom*) El Castillo, Chichen-Itzá "Church," Chichen-Itzá. Court of Governor's Palace, Uxmal



(*top to bottom*) Toltec gargoyles, Chichen-Itzá Skull frieze, Chichen-Itzá. Uxmal portal.

(*above*) Miguel de la Cruz and "headless god," Yaxchilán (*above right*) Donald Demarest with Mayan stella

Palenque

The author at Lacandon.

(*above*) Fresco detail, Bonampak. Infra-red photo by Giles Healey. (*below*) Lacandons at Bonampak. This photo was taken by Healey, facing the murals, on the day of their discovery.

(*above*) Mezcala standing man. (André Emmerich Gallery) (*left, top to bottom*) Alfonso Caso of Monte Alban. Manuel Gamio, Mexico's first archeologist Fred Davis, savior of folk arts.

Alma Reed and
Felipe Carillo Puerto, Yucatán, 1924

"Holy Family," Iguala

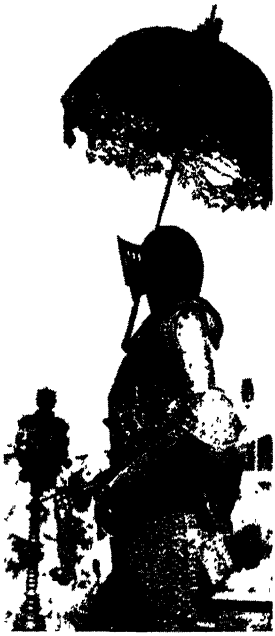
Nayarít musician.
(Stavenhagen Collection.)

"Thieves' Market," Lagunilla.

Veracruz head.
(Stavenhagen Collection.)

"Thieves' Market,"
Lagunilla

Iguanas for sale,
Chilpancingo



Ladies of the
Calle Organos.

12 CITIES OF PLEASURE

Cuernavaca: Palaces to Retire In—Taxco at Dawn—Tetipac Keeps Its Secret—Spratling Again—Iguala and Chilpancingo —Introduction to Acapulco—A Day in the Sun—Lake Tequesquitengo—Return to Cuernavaca—Conversation with a Gentleman of the Old School

February 12, Cuernavaca

We drove here this morning, with Beebe and Maia's brother Chris, a student in the architectural school of the University of Southern California. On the new toll road it took less than an hour from the city limits. Passing the monument to Zapata on the way into Cuernavaca, we stopped at Cortés's palace. I had already seen the frescoes by Rivera which the American Ambassador and former Morgan partner, Dwight Morrow, had commissioned in the time of Calles. I remembered them from 1937 as brilliantly decorative and pictorial, and they still are, with very little fading and cracking, though the courtyard balcony is not enclosed. But what they have to say about Cortés is appropriate to the site only if one believes that Cortés was the Satan of Mexico's history and Cuauhtémoc its Savior. The Spanish Catholic historian, Salvador de Madariaga, presents the other side of the case:

> How could he [Cortés] ever have guessed that the day would come when they would have to conceal his ashes, buried in Mexico at his own express wish, from the fury of the masses whose nation he had founded, who rose in destructive fury against the very man to whose vision they owed their country? How could he have foreseen that the Mexico created by him would some day erect a statue to Cuautemoc, not to honor Cuautemoc, but to insult *him;* that a painter of that race for which he had done so much to ennoble and set free from horrible practices, would one day adorn the walls of his palace

in Cuernavaca with slanderous scenes of the conquest, about which even the said painter is innocent, since they burst forth out of the unfathomable abyss of racial feelings?

The conquerors conquered . . . But the cruelty practiced by both parties still remains to plague Mexico. . . .

Fred Davis's house on Calle de Las Casas, which we visited next, is the earliest and perhaps the loveliest of the great garden mansions which Davis remodeled, first for Dwight Morrow (it was in Morrow's, a block or two away, that Lindbergh, after his flight to Paris, met and courted Anne) and later for President Calles and his millionaire friends, a circumstance which causes the main avenue here to be known as "The Street of Forty Thieves." Apart from the garden with its sloping lawns, giant shade trees, and flowering shrubs, the features of Davis's home are its seventeenth-century chapel and its bathrooms in the Puebla style.

The gardens laid out by Taxco's silver king, José de la Borda, in the eighteenth century are near the Cathedral. They are more extensive than Davis's but less opulent in their greenery, though Beebe managed to stuff herself with half-rotten mangoes under the towering, centuries-old *ahuehuetes*. The duck pond, with its hundred-foot-long steps under arcades, was filled with dirty water. The fountains were cracked and empty. It was here that Maximilian spent the most relaxed days of his brief reign, escaping from the responsibilities of Chapultepec Castle in the company of an eccentric Austrian naturalist who sported a yellow umbrella and kept scorpions, centipedes, and grasshoppers under his cork helmet. The Emperor wore *charro* (Mexican cowboy) dress here. The Court and its guests would swim in the tepid waters of the duck pond by moonlight. But the royal couple were not happy together. Maximilian had a son by the gardener's daughter—a son whose fate was a less glamorous repetition of his own: he was shot as a spy by a firing squad in Paris in 1917.

We had lunch at a restaurant on Hidalgo Street, swimming between courses in a turquoise pool in *their* enchanted garden—everybody of substance in Cuernavaca has one, and there is more substance here per acre than anywhere in Mexico. I wondered whether it might be true, the story that remodeling of old things had gone so far in Cuernavaca that even the *barrancas* were

being filled in. I recalled Bernal Díaz's comment on the cavernous ravines that criss-crossed the town in 1520; but that feature, I was glad to see, remains unchanged.

I had some difficulty picturing the Zapatistas riding through these streets hell-bent for the rich *haciendas* (charred ruins of which could still be seen among the cane fields and rice paddies as we approached the town), but I had no difficulty at all imagining the socio-economic climate that gave birth to *Zapatismo* when we visited Mrs. Margaret Jessup in her remodeled *palacio* on the street called Netzahualcoyotl.

Meg, whom I hadn't seen in twenty years, has been living comfortably on her alimony. She plays tennis and is well preserved, handsome, and gracious. The house, with its superbly planted small patio and blue-flowering jacarandas, is certainly a place in which to grow old gracefully. A vine with orange blossoms called "golden rain" climbs the moldering walls. Hibiscus fills the niches. Snapdragons, larkspur, and petunias grow all year 'round in the well-kept beds.

A tanned, expensively dressed American, who might have been an ex-Army officer or a polo player but turned out to be a geologist who had served with the wartime physical-sciences projects under Vannevar Bush, was present. Though he left before I had a chance to talk to him, I learned that he had retired to Cuernavaca after the war only to find himself involved in a lucrative business. It seems that a Cuban businessman on a flight from Havana had talked to him about the need for eggs in a country like Mexico, where over a million are imported yearly. As a result, he now operates three ranches in the Cuernavaca area, gives his hens seven inoculations against local epidemics, and goes a long way to supplying the shortage, or at least keeping up with the increased demand.

As he was leaving, he told us to look for a certain *hacienda* on our right, as we drove to Taxco. "Zapata," he said, "raided it once and slit the throats of all the thoroughbred horses." It was curious, I said, that a cavalry man like Zapata would be so cavalier with good horseflesh. It was curious, he agreed, "but there's a purely destructive strain in Mexican politicians."

Our hostess took up from there. Cárdenas' expropriation of oil, she said, had been senseless and unpopular with all Mexicans

except Cárdenas' political clique. Ruiz Cortines was a fair-enough ruler, "having swept out Alemán and his *canaille* with their noses in the treasury trough; but not since Porfirio Díaz has there been real justice and stability in Mexico. Just look at how horribly expensive everything is today—and prices are constantly going up." I pointed out that a quart of milk costs ten cents, as against twenty-four cents in New York. "That's an isolated case," she said.

Under Díaz, she continued, you could borrow money at four and one-half per cent.[1] "The *peso* was two to a dollar instead of eight to one. You could drive a gold train through the countryside without its being held up. Why? Because the lawless were strung up to the lamp posts—not many, mind you! It only took a few to make the Mexicans respect a strong man with *principles*."

As we drove out of Cuernavaca, we were stopped by a motorcycle policeman for exceeding forty in a zone restricted, it seems, to twenty. We pleaded ignorance of the law and the language. The officer explained patiently, warned politely, then shook hands with each of us in turn. I could imagine how an identical situation with a Mexican motorist would be handled in, say, Southern California.

On the mountainous road to Taxco, the hairpin turns become ever more hair-raising, and the color of the earth changes from red to gold to green.

February 13, Taxco

Chris and I awoke at 5:30. It is the hour when Taxco wakes, judging by the cacophony of church bells, juke boxes, and roosters. Half an hour later, with dawn only the halo of a candle flame on the rim of purple mountains, we ascended the Calle Guillermo Spratling (recently so named to the vocal disgust of latecomers in the silver trade) from the plaza to a point where we could look down almost perpendicularly on the homogeneous maze of interlocking tile roofs. The cobblestone ramps were slippery with early morning slops, but we conjectured that any pavement less rugged would make footing impossible in the rainy

[1] You can get eight per cent on *savings accounts* today.

season. Another unique feature of these winding streets is the complex of one-inch pipes which no one bothered to bury and which run like families of endless snakes uphill and down, around corners and over ditches, till finally they meet their sources in the stone fountains. Sewer pipes sometimes join the parade, though from a glimpse of one of the *barrancas,* which was almost choked with orange rinds, tin cans, and toilet paper, it was obvious that the plumbing (at least in this high, tourist-free part of Taxco) was even more primitive than San Angel's.

The plaza, which I hadn't seen by daylight on my first visit, was a picturesque sight indeed with its gorgeous pink-limestone church of Santa Prisca, its humming bazaars, and its bandstand. Borda financed Santa Prisca, the jewel of Mexican baroque, with his first fortune in silver. He is reputed to have said, "God gives to Borda and Borda gives to God." Losing everything later on, he recouped with the loan of one of Santa Prisca's diamonded custodias and with this second fortune built the Cuernavaca gardens. The trees in front of the flesh-colored façade were filled with chirping sparrows; and in their midst a wheel of flying saucers and a merry-go-round had been set up, complete with neon lights and calliope and already doing a rushing business.

We set forth, about 10:00, for Tetipac, a village tucked away in the mountains fifteen miles to the northeast. We had been told not to miss it, but our informant, Dan Brennan, the painter who is a part-time technician in the dental clinic of Dr. Milton Leof, had neglected to tell us either (a) what a hell of a road was in store for us or (b) precisely what to look for at the other end. As a result, by the time we arrived—after fording three *barrancas* and avoiding, at the risk of a cracked axle, a "bridge" that would surely have precipitated us into a fourth —we had to turn around and beat our dust-choked way back. Had we known it, there are archaic pyramids and stone-carved *ídolos* to be found half an hour's walk beyond Tetipac, but we found that out only after returning.

Both Covarrubias and Spratling had shown me examples of these *ídolos:* masks and small, highly stylized figurines in stone or jade. The "Olmec" civilization that produced these pieces may have pre-dated Teotihuacán or been contemporaneous with

that culture; there are resemblances in the style. The finest examples have something of the stark simplification of such modern sculptors as Arp and Brancusi and come from the Mezcala River basin. Because of a certain resemblance to the Easter Island sculptures, Spratling conjectures that there could have been trade between Peru and the Pacific Coast towns of Guerrero. At any rate this state, being entirely mountainous (vast areas of it are still inaccessible), escaped the influence of the Aztec and Tarascan empires, and is sure to yield astonishing treasures when more fully explored. Up to now, the treasure hunters, who conceal their sources of supply, have the field to themselves.

We had a drink with Brennan while another of Dr. Leof's assistants was filling (under protest) Beebe's teeth. He told us the story of a world-famous archeologist, outstanding authority on the methods used by the pre-Columbians to cut stone. This eminent scholar had come to Taxco, it seems, where he bought $5,000 worth of completely fake Guerrero statuary. Photographing this collection, he used it to illustrate a "definitive" monograph which at once became the laughing-stock of the native savants. The moral of this is that, without esthetic appreciation (which, of course, Spratling and Covarrubias have), all the knowledge in the world is worthless in the shaping of an expert.

Brennan and the Leofs are connoisseurs, having a collection of Remojadas sculpture surpassed only by Spratling's. I asked them where they ever found so many museum pieces. After years in Taxco, they said, natives bring them the stuff from as far away as Veracruz province. Spratling gets his the same way. But prices, stimulated by what Covarrubias and Spratling himself have written for American publications, are beginning to run high.

We drove down to Spratling's about 6:00 and found him in the throes of having his collection photographed, but in a quandary over what to call his monograph. The term Remojadas, he said, is a misnomer for the culture in question, since it derives from only one of several places where the sculpture is found. All he could think of, he said, looking at the faces with their quizzical expressions, was "Veracruz Paul Klee" or "The Mayas' Playful Cousins."

February 14, Acapulco

We left Taxco about 11:00 A.M. and had lunch in Iguala. I looked everywhere in the spacious plaza for some memorial to Iturbide, who proclaimed Mexico's independence here in 1820. The central monument records the event but not the name of the man who later had himself crowned Emperor. Near the monument I snapped a picture of an Indian with his wife and child, composing a perfect "Holy Family" against a photographer's backdrop of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

From Iguala we passed Chilpancingo, Guerrero's capital, where Padre Morelos in 1813 had held out against the Viceregal forces for so long, limiting the powers of the landowners for the first time by confiscation, and of the clergy by decreeing abolition of compulsory tithes. Then we drove for hours on a perfectly macadamed and banked highway over range after range of cactus-studded mountains, marveling how the militant priest had provided for the army which he marched to the siege of Acapulco and back. In the well-named Cañon de Zopilotes, a hundred vultures were feeding on the carcass of a dead horse.

Arriving finally at the Pacific, we were so haggard with heat, thirst, and dust that we drove straight down to the yacht basin, stripped into our trunks, ran across the highway on the seawall, and plunged in. Feeling a little refreshed, we pushed on to Playa Mimosa where Dick Oulihan, the *Time* correspondent, and his family have rented a beach of their own. This beach north of the resort is at the foot of beetling cliffs. You drive down an almost vertical ramp and there, amid coconut palms and bananas, is a perfect hundred yards of white sand—huge rounded boulders of black rock on one side and a towering promontory on the other.

Reservations hadn't been made for us and we finally wound up in a dive on the Calle Cuauhtémoc. The Aztec prince couldn't have arranged things better if he'd been there to welcome us. No sooner had we arrived than the lights gave out. There was no water in the taps "until *mañana*," and the bed Chris collapsed into collapsed with him to the floor in a shower of splinters. While they were repairing it and trying to rustle up some food for Maia and Beebe, Chris and I walked downtown, where a

Negro with a full set of gold teeth tried to sell us a night in a "very cheap" whorehouse.

February 15

In the house that has nothing, the pretty señorita is dusting the leaves of the rubber plants. . . .

We moved out of this "hotel" as quickly as we could and drove along the Pié de la Cuesta to Playa Mimosa, where we spent the day. Nothing gives spice to the *vida acapulqueña* quite like the enormous devilfish, moving like black shadows under the sky-blue waters and threatening to flop over on you with their sucking mouths. The tarantulas and scorpions that walk by night, we've not encountered; perhaps they find the competition too stiff and keep in their dens. The dens of Alemán and his revolutionary plutocracy are along the north shore. We're going to have a look at them tomorrow, along with the monster hotels. Conrad Hilton has stopped building his, they say, because the terrain is too shifty. Its skeleton, a honeycomb of poured concrete ten stories high, is (esthetically speaking) the most satisfying sight in Acapulco.

February 16

We've moved to The Quebrada, a hotel where the rooms, the swimming pool, and the prices are American. This is like three quarters of Acapulco, the other quarter being unadulterated Mexican paralysis—with the prices American. Our old hotel added thirty *pesos* to the bill—"a commission for the *muchacho* who brought you here." Since we'd already paid the *muchacho* handsomely for that disservice, we refused to pay again, and there was a stormy leave taking.

The Americans one sees here (and one sees and hears little else) make one ashamed of being American. They must be imported in flying boxcars from Southern California. Complaining children. Distracted mothers. Fat-flanked teen-agers in skin-tight trunks. Gray-haired school teachers in rhinestone-studded sunglasses—also in skin-tight trunks. Retired businessmen with female companions of every age from nineteen to ninety. One of the latter men and his girl friend have just been dredged from the bottom of the bay. They had rocks attached to their feet.

The guide who took them out in a rowboat and stripped their jewels before killing them has just been apprehended. Fortunately for Acapulco—because the tourists hadn't been concealing their intentions of going to a "safe" American resort next time—the guide turned out to be an American.

"Quebrada" means "cliffside," and this is also the name they give to the famed divers who now perform exclusively for the clientele of the Hotel Mirador. Chris and I went there to see them before the sun set. The cliff on which the hotel stands is at the neck of a narrow inlet. One hundred and fifty feet below, the surf crashes into this pocket and then withdraws with a frustrated bellow, leaving the jagged rocks exposed like teeth. As we sat in the bar, waiting, I felt the guilt of the bullring again; why was I here? A diver was clambering up the virtually perpendicular cliff across the defile. We watched him kneel and cross himself at a tiny shrine to the Virgin of Guadalupe. Then, to a roll of drums (there are spotlights for the evening performance and the diver carries a flaming torch), he soared out in a graceful swan dive as we held our breath. The incoming wave must be caught exactly at its crest to prevent death on the rocks. He caught it.

Earlier in the day, we had driven to Puerto Marques, a flask-shaped inlet north of the city, for some water skiing. The beach lies a few hundred feet from the Alemán villa, which is guarded by soldiers, though the ex-President was said to be in the capital. Across from the extremity of this inlet is a large lagoon with flamingoes stepping daintily among the reeds—Acapulco means "place of reeds"—and still further up the coast is a magnificent surf-side beach that looks endless. Evidently Acapulco's real-estate boom and its capacity to handle American pleasure lovers from spots too far from Miami will also be endless.

February 16

Leaving Acapulco about 6:30 A.M., we had an 8:00-o'clock breakfast in Chilpancingo, across from the bare Cathedral, surrounded by tamarind trees, where Morelos drew up the Constitution of 1813. In an adjoining plaza a statue of "the magnanimous Nicolás Bravo" faces the palace of the Guerrero state government. The inner court of the palace is filled with a dozen

murals in the styles of Rivera, Siqueiros, Orozco, all of them bad. This kind of symbolism—a bishop stuffing a cross down the throat of a handcuffed Indian—can be the tritest in the world. Cuauhtémoc is the central figure (his "bones" having turned up near here), dwarfing Morelos, Bravo, Guerrero, and the other local heroes.

A feature of the otherwise dull mountain country between Chilpancingo and Iguala, and an attractive one, is the clusters of beehives, each box painted in horizontal bands—blue-black-orange; red-green-yellow, etc. I'd like to know the origin of this Mondrianlike custom, which must be rather expensive, and whether it has any purpose other than the esthetic. Twice we were stopped by peasant girls who tried to sell us live iguanas. "What for?" we asked. "To eat—naturally!"

We had more conventional fare at Lake Tequesquitengo, where a very elaborate modern hotel for water skiers from the capital has just been completed. The two swimming pools were deserted. We made the most of them, though Chris, who has had dysentery ever since he arrived in Mexico, was neither swimming nor eating. He's pretty bitter about it, threatening to take a plane back to Los Angeles the minute he arrives in the capital—which is understandable. The *form* his complaint takes is as characteristically American as everything else about Polish-born Chris. "I see no point," he says disgustedly, "in spending another hour in this crummy country. If they haven't learned in all these centuries how to live, how to do *anything* right, and want to go on polluting their food and drinking water and poisoning each other—well, I don't want any part of it. I've had it."

* * *

We had a date to stop at Mrs. Jessup's in Cuernavaca for tennis, but she was indisposed too. It was just as well, for I would have missed a fascinating experience.

There was a Mexican of pure Spanish ancestry having tea with her when we arrived. His name was Eduardo Bolio Rendon. He had a fine shock of white hair, a sunburnt face, and piercing blue eyes. He is looking for a publisher for his *magnum opus*, entitled *Unworldliness as a Fine Art*. He makes a modest

but comfortable living of around 200 *pesos* ($16) a month redesigning old houses. He had something to do with one for Helen Hayes and is about to start another for Charlie Chaplin. "I have everything I need to be happy," he said. "Never wanting a car or radio, why should I ask for more?"

Mrs. Jessup's attractive house is one of his jobs; and his own, consisting of no more than a single book-lined room separated from its exquisite patio (like a stage set) by a faded, pink sailcloth curtain, adjoins hers, being connected by a four-foot-high monastic door of wood in the ivied wall. The patio has a hedge of crimson-flowered thorn cactus (*corona de Cristo*) and two superb trees, a *zapote* (chicle) directly in front of where the footlights would be, and to one side a fragrant pepper, trailing its willowlike leaves to the lawn. Columns, one dating to Cortés's time that Rendon "picked up one day in a pig trough at Tepoztlan," support the sides of the opening; and the exposed rafters of the ceiling are painted in gay folk designs of orange and blue.

Rendon, whose forbears came to Mexico more than 300 years ago, required little urging to elaborate his aristocratic philosophy. Three "historical disasters," in his opinion, have kept Mexico from realizing its potential. The first occurred at the time of the Conquest. "If Mexico had been conquered 200 years earlier," he says, "its conquerors would have been Byzantines, men of the Middle Ages, whose viewpoint would have coincided with that of the great Indian cultures already here. But Cortés, though he came out of the medieval court of Isabella la Católica, was caught up in the belated Renaissance of the epoch of Charles V. Though he tried, at least half-heartedly, to build an independent empire, with free Indians intermarrying with Spaniards, he was quickly recalled and disgraced. Similarly, the Franciscans and Dominicans, true medievalists who sympathized with the Indians' other-worldly culture—their inability to acquire property, measure accurately, think in commercial or scientific terms—lost out to the secular Church, in particular to the Jesuit order, which established the disastrous pattern by which Mexico has been gradually 'middle-classed' and shorn of its individuality.

"The second disaster," he continued, "occurred when the 'liberal' Maximilian was ousted by the 'conservative' Juárez. Only Bulnes's interpretation of Juárez's character is to be relied

on. Juárez was an Indian, to be sure, but an Indian who had become a petty lawyer, and hence dedicated to solid middle-class ideals such as 'progress' and 'social comfort.' Maximilian, a true aristocrat, at once espoused the Indian cause, thus alienating the secular Church which had brought him to Mexico in the hope that he would reinstate its lost privileges. Juárez triumphed because he was wholly the tool of American interests. At one point he even offered half of Mexico's territory to the United States—an offer that your Congress was too embarrassed to accept."

"But, Señor Rendon," I interrupted, "wasn't almost half of Mexico's territory already ceded to the United States?"

"That came later."

"But wasn't the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo signed in 1848?"

"Perhaps. But dates are not important. I can never remember my own birth date. It is the spirit of history that matters, and if you are interested in the larger picture, I shall continue."

"By all means, do."

"Well, as I was saying, Juárez's acquiescence in American materialism was Mexico's second disastrous failure to realize her destiny . . ."

"And the third?"

". . . was Ambassador Dwight Morrow, whose reign and diabolical influence I myself saw at first hand here in Cuernavaca."

"Morrow?"

"He taught the petty middle-class lawyers, who had hitherto been content with a few hundred or a few thousand *pesos*, to think in terms of millions. He introduced the legalized larceny of the House of Morgan with his confounded 'liberalism'; and from that point on the Mexican Revolution became the rule (in the name of social benefits, security and industrialization) of Calles, Alemán, Ávila Camacho & Company."

"You leave out Cárdenas . . ."

"Cárdenas is a rich man, too; but Cárdenas' aim has always been power—to work behind the scenes. Cárdenas is the real ruler of Mexico, even today. He has a home here in Cuernavaca, of course, like the rest of them, and when anything goes wrong

he calls a meeting, *sub rosa*, and the orders go out to the puppets who occupy the nominal offices, from President on down."

"The golden age of Mexico," Rendon continued, "was the age of Díaz, but Díaz unfortunately made two mistakes. He failed to democratize the country when he might have, leaving the Indians out of his scheme of things entirely; and he lived too long, losing his grip and thus preparing the way for the decade of anarchy that followed his exile.

"Mexico today," he concluded sadly, "has lost its chance to be a great nation. Individuality persists among the sixty or seventy per cent of the people not yet reduced to middle-class status. But the percentage—what with the success of industrialization, social security, and the infiltration of American tourism with its gadget-mindedness—is diminishing rapidly. In fifty years, every Mexican will be an undifferentiated consumer type, like you Americans. Already the country is flooded with cars, radio sets, and Pepsi-Cola—as you can see. Why, I can remember when every woman in this town could cook. And cook well. All they know how to do now is open cans and push the contents in front of you—and they don't *like* to do even *that*."

"The legacy of Zapata?" I said with a smile.

"Do you know John Steinbeck?" he asked.

I said that I had known him.

"Well, he was here for some weeks writing the scenario for that absurd movie—*Viva Zapata!*, I think they called it. One day at a café in the Zócalo I came up to him at his table and said: 'Why in the name of God don't you hire a taxi just for one afternoon and go out in the countryside and see what your hero really did—how he destroyed all the wealth of this richest of Mexican states, totally destroyed it—instead of writing this absurd rot about his noble idealism?'

"But don't misconstrue my position," Rendon added. "While I'm not a professional radical like Steinbeck, neither am I a hopeless reactionary like Evelyn Waugh. Waugh was here, too, and I said the same thing to him. 'Instead of assuming that the secular clergy is doing good and is being persecuted unjustly, why don't *you* hire yourself a cab and go out and talk to the average Indian who truly loves God and the saints and his own

church, but hates the grasping priests with all his heart and all his soul? But you won't,' I said to him, 'because the truth would interfere with your dogma.'

"No," Rendon said, "the truth is always beautiful—because it is true. How many of us can face it? Mexico will lose, is already losing, its chance to face the truth."

As we were saying goodbye at the door, he pointed to the hills fading in the twilight. "Do you see that haze?" he said. "I can remember when the atmosphere here, forty or fifty years ago, was absolutely clear—every day, all day."

"You mean it's the smog of the capital, reaching even this far?" I asked.

"Not necessarily," he replied with a smile. "It's more than that. It's creeping all over Mexico. The haze of modernity."

13 THE INTELLECTUALS

Intellectuals at a Party—Why Mexicans Can't Be Objective About Americans—A Young Novelist—Dinner with a Poet—Carlos Fuentes and Octavio Paz at Home—O'Gorman on the Literati—Vasconcelos Is Not Impressed—Elena Poniatowska—Further Conversation with Paz—Pessimism of the Intellectuals

February 13, Mexico

As we were driving down Insurgentes from the Cuauhtémoc Monument on our way home, this headline in an afternoon paper caught my eye. Translated literally: "WHEN THE WIND BLOWS, THE BODIES DON'T FLOAT." I thought it was a bit of pure poetry on the part of a daring typesetter until I found out later that it referred to the robbery and drowning of the aged American businessman and his girl friend at Acapulco. Not pure, but still poetry.

February 14

Attended the opening of a show by a painter whose every picture contained the face of a cat. This was because (she explained) her husband had left her, taking his cats with him. Later, a friend of the painter gave a supper party for her. Everything very chic. On the main wall one of the three versions of de Chirico's great painting of the dummies in the fiery square. On another a dark, glowing surrealist canvas by Matta. Since our hostess had been introduced to me as a friend of this painter, I opened the conversation by saying that I thought Matta a wonderful person. Instead of accepting this conversationally, she leaned forward with her drink in her hand, fixed me with her big troubled eyes, and said: "Wonderful? I don't find him a

wonderful person at all. I'm fond of him and think he's a good painter. But what's wonderful about him?"

Not wishing to spend the rest of the night defending the Chilean artist's spirit, I moved to another circle and got into a less personal argument with Lan Adomián, the Ukrainian conductor, and Carlos Fuentes, a young novelist. The musician, when he heard that I hoped to write a book about Mexicans for Americans, said that I should write one about Americans directed at the Mexicans. I suggested that such a book might be more acceptable if written by an objective Mexican.

"Impossible," said Adomián. "There is no such thing as an objective Mexican on the subject of your country."

"True or false?" I asked the young novelist.

"True—unfortunately," said Fuentes, who speaks excellent English, having been brought up in the Mexican Embassy at Washington. "I could not be unbiased, try as I might, and no Mexican could."

"Why not?" I persisted, not disbelieving but wanting reasons. "Eighteen forty-eight is more than a hundred years away. Is it still a national trauma?"

"Not in itself, perhaps," Fuentes replied, "but as a persistent symbol of Mexico's economic (and, therefore, generally political) dependence on your country."

"We haven't *always* supported the reactionaries," I said. "I understand that Vasconcelos calls the radical Juárez a yes man for American policy."

"That proves my point," Fuentes replied. "The Mexican intellectual—and Vasconcelos is a peculiarly isolated example, having finally detached himself emotionally from everything truly Mexican—often feels compelled to criticize Juárez, the man above all others who finally succeeded in making Mexicans proud of being Mexican. Why? Because Juárez happened to find himself in the unique position of being the beneficiary of American goodwill at a time when American foreign policy (under Lincoln) wished to counter rival European ambitions in respect to Mexico. Vasconcelos is so anti-American that he feels compelled to be anti-Juárez—another Mexican failure to be detached about the United States!"

"But you," I said to Fuentes; "why can't you be detached

about us? Surely you're intelligent enough to realize that the United States is 'not just' a country of imperialists, materialists, alien baiters, racists, and culture haters?"

"Point by point, yes," he replied, "but back of my every effort to be fair, the very fact that I'm a Mexican would make it impossible for me to be psychologically impervious to the *sheer weight* that a more powerful, more homogeneous neighbor imposes upon us; and not resent the necessarily unconscious sense of complacent superiority which accompanies that pressure."

Fuentes spoke without hard feeling. Adomián, a non-Mexican who has lived in Mexico long enough to appreciate the Mexican attitude toward us, supplied the details.

"Consider," he said, "Mexico's utter dependence on the United States today—the flood of American manufactured goods, advertising propaganda, moving pictures, and so on. Or the devaluation of the *peso,* and its threatened further devaluation to attract tourism, at the cost of constantly rising prices for Mexicans. And then, on top of that, consider the scornful attitude of the average tourist toward Mexican 'backwardness,' the constantly reiterated pride in 'American know-how,' the insularity of the American business colony here. Is it any wonder that Mexicans, who are far too individualistic ever to become Communists themselves, are highly *receptive to Communist propaganda,* which skillfully plays upon American ruthlessness and cultural myopia? Is it surprising that American persecution of free-thinking intellectuals by self-appointed vigilantes is resented—when everyone knows that your FBI is perfectly capable of handling the real spies? Is it surprising that a leading Mexican liberal, when asked by an American, 'Are you a Communist?' replied, 'No. I do not have the honor of being one.'?

"Never forget," Adomián added, "that though Mexico is not a democracy in your sense, and though our president is truly king, he and his ministers and the whole ruling group are apt to be intellectuals. Many of them, perhaps the majority, read, write, and even publish poetry. How can they possibly understand a government of businessmen who scorn, hate, and even persecute intellectuals?"

We left the party with Adomián about midnight, descending

into the street, which had a strong odor of cabbages. "Illuminating gas," the composer explained, "which escapes into the sewers and water mains."

February 15

Carlos Fuentes came to lunch. Following our conversation last night, he has written a short story which takes place when the whole world has been divided between the U. S. and the U.S.S.R. Mexico, the only unassimilable trouble spot, has just agreed to become the fiftieth U. S. state, and the Mexican politicos who have just elected senators and representatives are proceeding to teach us a few lessons in Latin chicanery, making private satrapies out of American farms and industries. When the U. S. becomes completely demoralized by this Machiavellian tactic, Fuentes said, "you throw us out, giving us Arizona and New Mexico to keep us quiet. We refuse Texas, of course."

Mexican writers, Fuentes says, are presently divided into two groups. "The first group, which waves the flag vigorously and breakfasts at Sanborn's, does not write. There was a twenty-page booklet at the beginning of the career of each of these writers which is being constantly 'revised.' Some of them take trips on slow boats to China—looking for 'material.'

"The second group fights shy of 'isms.' It wants to present a personal vision of Mexico without those formulas to which Mexican writers have always been addicted." Such a writer, Fuentes continued, is Juan Rulfo, whose novel *Pedro Páramo* "is about the Mexican conscience beyond folklore and picturesque local backgrounds—a novel about how Mexicans (even people in general) really think." This goes beyond the "realism" of such a novel of a generation ago as Mariano Azuela's *Los de Abajo,* Fuentes declared, good as that tale of the 1910 Revolution is. He recommended also Martín Luis Guzmán's *La Sombra del Caudillo* and *El Aguila y la Serpiente;* Augustín Yánez's *Al Filo del Agua;* and Rafael F. Muñoz's *Vámonos con Pancho Villa.* Among poets, his praise was reserved for Octavio Paz's *Libertad bajo Palabra* and José Gorostiza's *Muerte sin Fin.* The poets and the novelists in this group, he said, both regard Alfonso Reyes as their literary father.

"These writers of my generation don't want symbols, like

'Cuauhtémoc'—they want truth. We want to *understand* our past. Mexico hasn't assimilated its own history. Our great figures —unfortunately—are more alive than people living in the present. Everybody is still fighting their battles!"

I told Fuentes that I had made this point in a review published in the *Mexico City News* last week, beginning, "The moral issue of the Conquest is as unresolved in Mexico today as it was in 1521. . . ."

"Exactly!" he said. "Cortés is a more controversial figure in Mexico right now than Adlai Stevenson is or ever will be among you! But the Conquest, as I see it, was a great Renaissance phenomenon; the tragedy for Mexico was that the Counter-reformation made the Colony (New Spain) a petrified organism. A killing of the spirit took place between 1521 and 1821. Our greatest poet, Sor Juana, was one of its victims. She felt instinctively that only by leaping into a revitalized humanism could God be made to live again. And in her poetry—which is like Rimbaud's and Baudelaire's in its rebellious making of man into a little god—she took the leap. But of course the Church put a stop to that, and for the last twenty years of her life she was silent. If she'd been permitted to continue speaking, we wouldn't have approached the Independence tongue-tied, barren of ideas, and terrified of foreign theories.

"Always with us," he concluded, "the vase has tried to shape the substance, or the substance has broken the vase. This dualism is a recurrent theme of Sor Juana's poetry—and of all subsequent Mexican poets, including Paz and Gorostiza today."

* * *

Maia and I had dinner with Antonio Souza and his wife at their new apartment on the Reforma, just off the Golden Angel. The young poet and art dealer apologized for the arches and patio, and the bathrooms with their black onyx tubs raised on platforms of Puebla tile, which he called "corny." Though preferring Antonio's own taste, as a contemporary, I couldn't help wondering whether it would be regarded as "corny" a decade or two hence. The surrealist pictures; the whatnots of mineral fragments and pre-Columbiana; the appropriate bedroom prints, "La Pureté de Virginité" and "Je t'aimerai toute ma vie."

Before dinner, which was superbly cooked, and served by a uniformed maid on a card table in front of the living-room fireplace, Antonio showed us his scrapbook. When we came to a flattering story about his gallery that had appeared in *Time* recently, he remarked: "All my friends here, when they saw it, immediately asked, 'My God! How much did you have to *pay* for it?' "

After dinner we talked about poets and artists in the capital —"for there are none anywhere else any more, you know; not even in my native Guadalajara, which used to be the most cultured community in the country. Mexico is like New York, only more so: *all* the artists gravitate here."

"Tell me, Antonio," I said, "who are the artists of your generation who count, and among how many people do they make their weight felt?"

"None of the young artists have really 'arrived' yet," he answered, "not even Cuevas, whom we both admire so much; Cuevas is better known in Paris than here. Among the writers—well, that world is even smaller in a way, even more provincial, though we're beginning to produce a few who *may*, twenty or thirty years from now, be known outside of Mexico. Like Octavio Paz and Juan Rulfo, for instance. As it is, 2,000 copies is an enormous sale for a literary work; 1,000 is better than average. It's a very cliqueish world, very intimate, even ingrown. Necessarily! for who else cares about its triumphs and defeats? For years Alfonso Reyes has dominated this little world. Reyes is a great scholar, a great artisan, a great gentleman—as you have seen. But Reyes is essentially a humanist rather than an artist. In Reyes one detects *merit*—the worst thing that can be said of a poet, no? Especially in a new country like ours. We can't afford this classicism and good taste, yet. Posada and Orozco didn't have merit nor were they humanists, but no one will deny that they were artists, and Mexican to the core. Among the younger men, Cuevas and Rulfo are artists. . . ."

"How about Fuentes?" I interjected.

"Fuentes? I don't know. Perhaps he thinks and analyzes too much. He wants to succeed Paz, who is the literary dictator of our generation, as Reyes was of the one before. When Rulfo ridiculed him gently at a meeting at which he'd been reading

his latest story—he took it. But Fuentes will have to stop writing stories in which there is a cocktail party with a Cranach on the wall, just to prove he is familiar with both."

Antonio agreed with me that in the fine arts the architects are the real innovators in Mexico today. "But only Candela," he said, "is really revolutionary, has no 'chic' in his work—like El Eco. Candela's clean forms and exuberance and grandeur-to-match-the-landscape affect me the way American musical comedy does—*Hellzapoppin'*, for instance. O'Gorman is something else again. His house—well, it's not a home, is it? If he were consistent he'd have a waterfall gushing out of the rocks instead of a perfectly functional twentieth-century bathroom tucked away behind those neo-Aztec mosaics. And he'd dress like Tarzan!"

February 16

Spent several hours at the O'Gormans' this afternoon. O'Gorman's sister, who dropped in for tea, told me that Juan is about to finish a book-length poem. I gathered that it was on some aspect of nature but written in such a way as to suggest human history allegorically. "But don't tell Juan I told you!" Her brother, meanwhile, had joined in the general conversation about poetry and was discoursing brilliantly on every style from Góngora and Quevedo to Villaurrutia and Paz. He is rather contemptuous of the young Mexicans. He thinks them unduly under the spell of Nerval, Mallarmé, Cocteau, "and the other French decadents," and of the existentialism of his brother Edmundo O'Gorman, an influential professor of philosophy at the University for whom Juan has no use at all. He is also extremely scornful of what he calls "the docile, subservient worship of these unrebellious young men at the shrine of that pompous old pedant Alfonso Reyes. Did you know that Reyes recently announced a series of lectures under the title 'Prolegomenon to an Introduction to the Study of the Esthetics of the Greeks'?"

* * *

Within an hour of leaving the Pedregal, Fuentes called up and said that Octavio Paz had just returned from New York and was at his apartment. Could I come over?

The two young diplomats—they support themselves by working in the Foreign Office—were having a late dinner in the plush modern apartment of Carlos's father, who is presently Ambassador to Panama. On a table were autographed photographs of some of the celebrities the elder Fuentes had known. I noticed one of Harry Truman sitting at his presidential desk. Carlos turned the picture upside down. "Read what is written on his memo pad," he said. Quite clearly the President had scrawled, "Get John Carter Vincent's ideas about China."

Paz, who is in his early forties, is solidly built, boyish looking, handsome. His clear intelligence shed light on everything we talked about—and we spent a good part of the night talking. His English is excellent, not so much because he has a good vocabulary as because he chooses his words carefully to express what he wants to say. (Maybe we could all learn to use words this way, I found myself reflecting, if forced in school to think out loud in a foreign language.)

I asked Paz about Reyes first. Was he a stuffed shirt or a creative influence? "A creative influence," Paz answered without hesitation. "He was the first Mexican intellectual to release us from our uncreative, centuries-old absorption in our own culture. I mean, of course, absorption to the point of total ignorance of other cultures. We were smugly satisfied with our own. The release is by no means complete yet—as you yourself have remarked in commenting on the unhealthy domination of the fine arts by the nationalists. But if contemporary literature is comparatively more free, it is because of Reyes' insistence that we grow up and accept the cultures of the English, the French, the Germans, the Orientals, and the Greeks as part of our common heritage.

"Mexican history," he went on, "has suffered as much from this insularity as Mexican literature. It has been marked by violence and spasmodic breaks with the past. This lack of continuity dates from the time the Spanish Conquerors destroyed at one stroke the intellectual-priestly caste of the Aztecs. The Indians were plunged into a Long Night. The very meaning of existence for them was snuffed out. They had been a people of collective institutions and symbols. Suddenly they were at the feet of a people fiercely individualistic, competitive, and comba-

tive: a people whose aim in temporal life was the amassing of money and power over others—two ambitions the Indians quite failed to comprehend. A people, furthermore, whose religious preoccupation was the attempted reconciliation of the Christian-Judaic concept of One God with the Greek plurality of deities reflected in the veneration of the saints. No wonder the bewildered Indian fell back on the worship of the most basic and cherished of his own gods, Tonantzin ('Our Mother') and grasped eagerly at the possibility of identifying her with the Virgin.

"But the basic conflict," Paz continued, "between this identification of symbols, on the one hand, and the Church's secular powers and property rights, on the other, was not resolved. Throughout the centuries of Colonial Mexico it continued, with the Indian being persecuted and exploited by the Colonial Government and the Church at the same time that he was being protected (not always effectively) by the Spanish Crown and the religious orders—Franciscan and Dominican.

"It is not surprising that in the next great rupture—the Independence struggle of the 1820's—two humble priests, Hidalgo and Morelos, led the struggle of the Indians for their freedom from oppression and for the restitution of their ancient landed rights, and that when the Colonial ruling class and the official Church defeated that rebellion, its leader, Iturbide, should achieve the Independence as a means of defeating both the revolutionary aims of the people and the enlightened policy of then-liberal Spain."

I told Paz at this point that O'Gorman had given me a history of Mexico to read, a history written at the time of the 1910 Revolution by two Mexican socialists, and that they had called Juárez's Constitution of 1857 the first such document in the history of the world to ordain "true democracy" by guaranteeing the "right" of the worker and farmer to the full use of what they produced.

"There is a tendency in Mexico," Paz commented, "to exaggerate the virtues of Juárez and his infallibility. Juárez didn't, of course, foresee this result of his Reform, but it is a fact that its actual result was to cause the third violent rupture in our history, the third great discrepancy between Idea and Reality."

"In what way?"

"There is no doubt," he said, "that the abuses of the Church's temporal power, its vast holdings in property, and its support of political reaction through such figures as Iturbide, Bustamente, and the still more unprincipled Santa Anna demanded the separation of Church and State and the seizure of the Church's accumulated wealth, which Juárez effected. But the Reform Laws were patterned on legislation of the midnineteenth century that had been enacted in more advanced countries to protect the rights of the rising middle class. In Mexico there was no middle class. There was still feudalism. So what happened? The communal lands of the Indians, the *ejidos* surrounding their villages which had remained more or less intact since Aztec times and were at least tolerated by the Church, were broken up and sold on the open market. Instead of falling into the hands of the Indians as small landholders (as Juárez no doubt hoped they would), they were seized by the feudal *hacendados* and the *nouveaux riches*. The enforced sale of church properties had the same result. Instead of enriching the disinherited, it increased the wealth of the already wealthy. Thus was prepared the way for the tyranny of Porfirio Díaz: the reduction of the Indian masses to peonage, and the sale by the state to foreign interests of Mexico's natural resources.

"The Revolution of 1910, which began under the pure, principled, but landed-proprietor idealism of Madero as an attempt to correct the political abuses of the Díaz dictatorship, very soon became, under Villa and Zapata, a fundamental attempt to restore to the Indian his stolen rights and lands (to which he still had legal title). My father, though he was a lawyer from Jalisco, fought with Zapata in the South between 1912 and 1914, and actually saw many of these just and legal titles which Zapata felt could be protected only with guns."

Carlos at this point in the conversation got out a volume of documents pertaining to the 1910 Revolution and read us a hilarious account of the first meeting between Zapata and Villa when they joined forces briefly at the Presidential Palace in 1914. The two guerrilla captains were in agreement on at least one matter. Carranza—this "lawyer," this "ex-Senator under Díaz,"—was not to be trusted. "I've been fighting for twenty-

six years," Villa had said, "for what these windbags *talk* about," and he had gone on to say that as soon as educated people begin to phrase the people's demands, those demands somehow lose their original meaning. Zapata had replied that he'd been fighting just as long for his people without once finding it necessary to rest his head on a linen pillowcase.

I remarked that Villa and Zapata were genuine folk heroes, but wasn't it comparatively easy for them to be radical extremists, having no responsibilities to anyone but their local partisans? And wasn't it unfair to judge Madero—who felt a sense of responsibility for the country as a whole—by the same standard?

Paz's answer, which didn't completely satisfy me, was that Zapata and Villa understood instinctively the need of abolishing once and for all the feudal exploitation of the Indian masses. The Revolution was to accomplish the abolition (more or less) in the ensuing twenty-five years. In that understanding—"which constituted an adjustment to Mexican reality"—they had been closer to Morelos, who resembled them in other ways, than to Juárez.

February 17

Talking with Vasconcelos this morning, I quoted Paz on the subject of Juárez.

"Ruiz Cortines happens to be a great disciple of Juárez," the old philosopher said. "That is why all over Mexico today it is 'Juárez this' and 'Juárez that.' "

"Just as, under Cárdenas, the national hero was Morelos," I suggested, "and under Alemán . . ."

"Money!"

"But did Juárez think that the division of the Church's properties would benefit the Indians?" I asked.

"Juárez was a typical liberal. He believed in individuals and individualism. He believed that if you give the wealth to individuals, the wealth of society as a whole will increase. But if you are a true Christian—which Juárez, of course, was not—you have to think of the welfare not of individuals but of the masses."

"The intellectuals," I reminded him, "are always talking about the masses."

"Yes," he said, "but they wear English bow ties. There is the hypocrisy of the intellectual. He talks of the masses but he knows nothing about them. Our young writers today, under the influence of Reyes, make a religion of *style*. There is form but very little content in their writing."

"You find this true of Lorca?"

"A little bit of music—no thought. I prefer to read Dante and Shakespeare."

"How about Juan Rulfo and Montes de Oca?"

"Never heard of them."

"Well—Paz?"

"Too intellectual."

"But in Mexican writing," I persisted, "how far back do you have to go to find writers who knew the masses and didn't idealize them?"

"To Azuela. And Guzmán. Azuela had a poor style but a lot to say. Guzmán's novel of the Revolution is even better."

* * *

At Sanborn's on the Reforma I had a drink with Elena Poniatowska, a feature writer for *Novedades* who resembles Maria Douglas in her refusal to conform to the Mexican feminine "norm" but is different in every other way. She is short, cute, and effervescent rather than elegant, statuesque, and melancholy. Though a lineal descendant of the last king of Poland, she is much too sophisticated (and perhaps genuinely democratic) to use her legitimate title of Princess. Her parents sent her to the United States to be educated. The time she spent at the Sacred Heart Convent a few blocks from Raven Hill, where the future Princess of Monaco was also receiving a religious upbringing, may have generated her first publication, *Lilus Kikus*. This novel has added a phrase to the vocabulary of those in the know, *lilus kikismo*. The phrase means, Antonio tells me, acting perversely naïve while knowing exactly what the score is. It's the characteristic of the heroine of the novel, a little Mexican girl with no respect for the conventional mores. And it's a clannish protective device, Elena intimated to me, shared in some degree by Paz, the younger generation's most

accomplished poet; by Rulfo, the potential Faulkner; by the Kafkaesque Arreola and the Huxleyan Fuentes.

Her second book, *Meles y Teleo* (a play on the words *me lees y te leo:* if you read my book, I'll read yours), is in the form of a play and pokes fun at the mutual-admiration society of the poets. It was published this year.

The typical Mexican woman, Elena confided, is faithful to her husband, partly out of love and partly out of fear, though the husband is far from being faithful to her. He has at least one *casa chica*, often with its own complement of children. A prosperous grocer, for instance, recently took *both* families to the bullfight, seating the legal wife and her five children in the expensive seats of the *sombra* (shade) and the illegal one with *her* five in the less costly *sol*. The typical legal wife "is not very cultivated but extremely dignified and is reasonably contented in her limited life, which revolves about dressing, playing canasta, attending weddings and funerals." This applies to the upper and middle classes, with the exception of the International Set. "The typical lower-class woman, on the other hand, works, suffers, takes care of her husband's savings—if any (to keep him from spending it all on drinks and *fiestas*); though, in the provinces, where life is cleaner and more wholesome, especially in Yucatán, conditions are less desperate."

February 18

I met Fuentes and Paz at a bar on the Reforma at 2:30. They were having drinks with the editor of the *Novedades*' literary supplement, Fernando Benitez, and some other writers. Paz seemed to know the people at the adjoining tables too. As we walked out and up the Paseo he described one of them as "a critic emasculated by his two wives. And now," he added, "the daughters are feeding on the corpse." He looked down at the sidewalk reflectively. "Aren't modern women witches! But I suppose it's our own fault. We should marry peasants. Or fat grandmothers too contented to prey on us . . ."

Fuentes continued on to an appointment. Paz and I had lunch at a little restaurant on Londres. There, too, everybody seemed to know him. I asked him if he would complete his interpretation of Mexican history.

"The Revolution of 1910," he said, "helped us to recognize ourselves, but not our place in the world. It destroyed the liberal tradition that had followed the Catholic tradition, but what it replaced them with was ambiguous. In an early book he now repudiates, *La Raza Cósmica,* Vasconcelos attempted to supply us with a philosophy. His idea was to make Latin America the base for a universal culture which would combine the best elements of East and West. Instead, the painters, and most of the other intellectuals, turned to Marxism—and Vasconcelos, in disgust, to Catholicism. Latin America, unfortunately, has created nothing in political philosophy, though it has created much in art. And as for us, we continued having our Revolution without an ideology. The primitive revolutionary leaders—like Villa, Zapata, even Carranza—would have nothing to do with the intellectuals (like the revolutionary socialist Flores Magón, for instance). In consequence, *we were not able to organize our new institutions effectively.* Carranza's democratic constitution of 1917 was not suited to the realities of Mexican life. It decreed a federal republic where centralism not only existed but was bound to become stronger.

"There was an advantage in this lack of ideology, though. We were saved from totalitarianism. There might be a one-party system, but the party couldn't possibly be monolithic. There could be no rigid 'party line.' No witch hunts. No terrorism against heresy."

"And after Carranza," I said, "what happened to the Revolution?"

"Between then and now, Cárdenas is the only great president we have had. The only president, that is, who brought the revolutionary aims into contact with reality and carried them further."

"He had weaknesses?"

"Plenty. His socialist education program was silly. He had no esthetic understanding at all. He was paternalistic, a *cacique.* The workers' movement which he developed to support his social program wasn't independent. But perhaps he can't be blamed for that. The pattern had been established in Carranza's time. Instead of following the independent anarcho-syndicalism

advocated by Flores Magón, the workers under Carranza made a *pact* with the government. This policy continued when Morones, the all-powerful and corrupt labor boss of the twenties, sold the whole movement, head and tail, to Calles. Lombardo Toledano could have established a free labor movement with his new CTM in the thirties, but instead he made it an instrument of Cárdenas' policy—and so, dependent on the government once more. Cárdenas' policy was 'good,' one might say; but what followed Cárdenas? Ultimately, Alemán . . . The labor leaders are merely transferred from one politician's pocket to another's."

I told him of Betty Kirk's optimistic view that a measure of democracy is realized in Mexico through the right, center, and left wings of the PRI. "Does that theory hold water, Octavio?"

"Only a little water," he replied. "Without free elections, how is one to know what the will of the majority really is? But what is even more serious is this. We haven't learned to respect the opinion of the minority. This is the cause of most of the violence you still find in Mexico. With us, the minority is either ignored or destroyed. We can't tolerate dissent. Thus we create a desert in public life, and in cultural life too! There are no dialogues in Mexico—only monologues. Siqueiros makes a monologue. Vasconcelos makes a monologue. How typical, his denouncing the younger writers in one breath as 'formalistic and without content' and in the next admitting that he has never heard of Rulfo and Montes de Oca! If he carried on such an irresponsible monologue as that in a country of dialogues, somebody would pick him up. But here, who cares? They call you a name and let it go at that. I used to be called a 'Trotskyite.' Anything to avoid a genuine difference of opinion followed by a rational argument on the merits of the case. Instead: damn the dissenters, the minority!"

He laughed. "I haven't talked so much politics in years. In this society, at least, art is more important than politics. It provides an answer to life. Even a badly run society may produce a great art. In times of vulgarity, poets—Mallarmé is an example—preserve purity. They show by their work that it is still possible to make clean, uncompromising, honest things."

February 19

I am regretfully conscious that I haven't managed to meet a representative cross-section of Mexico's writers; and that, even if I had, I am not equipped linguistically to evaluate their contributions by either local or international standards. For obvious reasons I haven't spent much of my dwindling six months in the theater. Yet playwrights like Sergio Magaña, Emilio Carballido, Elena Garro, and Luisa Josefina Hernandez constitute, Don Demarest assures me, the most vital vanguard of the Mexican literary renaissance.

Among the nondramatic writers Carlos Pellicér, in the generation following Reyes', is highly regarded by young and old. It was Reyes and the writers of Pellicér's generation who made the bridge from the fastidious but rootless classicism of the pre-Revolutionary Díaz period, "going to school" to such accepted classicists as López Velarde and Rubén Darío, then rejecting what couldn't be reconciled with the new Mexico.

In the "art for art's sake" twenties, when the international symbolist movement was being discovered, Villaurrutia and Gorostiza were the innovators. In the thirties, as with us, social and political problems merged with esthetic, philosophic ones. Arreola, with his short stories of Kafkaesque fantasy, and Rulfo, the Faulknerian novelist whose villagers' problems seem too deeply rooted to be resolved by anything but death, grew out of this fusion. Both were born in 1918. "I am not concerned," Arreola writes, "with plots and themes, since these are things of the intelligence. I believe that intelligence leads us nowhere. I try to materialize the spiritual." And of the novelist, the perceptive critic Ramón Xirau has written: "When the dead talk in Rulfo's novel, it is not to be considered fantasy but to be known that everyone walks the thin chalk line between life and death."

This is the generation dominated intellectually by Paz. Paz nurtured his lyrical intelligence first on surrealism and then on existentialism, the pessimistic fare of all the younger men. But the peculiar wit and detachment which Paz has gained from a succession of embassy windows around the world invites comparison (in our literature) with Eliot and Auden, those expatriates whose contemplation of their homelands is similarly

acute and remote. Among the still younger writers, Montes de Oca, whose free verse is almost as dense with extravagant imagery as Dylan Thomas's, and Fuentes, whose forthcoming novel of the complex social levels of society in the capital is said to owe much to Joyce and Dos Passos as well as Faulkner—are outstanding. I have translated the opening of one of Montes de Oca's beautiful poems as follows:

> Life, to your hands I entrust
> all the generations folded in my flesh:
> the future, shadowed by the hummingbird's delay;
> the diamond: snow's first fire-flush; the rust-
> proof armor plate of supplication guarding ruin
> against definitive dust . . .

But though my Spanish isn't up to evaluating the work of these Mexicans *as literature*, I continue to be astonished by the range of their interests and their grasp of history. I wasn't sure that I had gotten an answer to the question about the impact of that history on present-day Mexico that I'd asked Paz; but his book on the Mexican character, *El Laberinto de la Soledád*, supplied the philosophical conclusion. This morning I translated the passage in question as follows:

> The Mexican does not rise above his solitude but rather encircles himself in it. We inhabit our solitude like Philoctetes his island. Hopelessly, without wishing too much to return to the world . . . We consume our solitude without reference to a future redeemer or a present creator. We oscillate between surrender and reserve, scream and silence, feast and dearth, without ever delivering ourselves. Our impassibility covers life with the mask of death. . . . Both in life and in death the Mexican shuts himself from the world.
>
> All our contradictions, the extraordinariness of our situation, can be found in the fact that we are not only enigmatic to strangers but to ourselves. . . . Our intimacy never flourishes naturally without the goads of fiesta, alcohol, death. Slaves, serfs, submissive races always present themselves covered by a mask, smiling or intractable. . . . Fear of the master, distrust of his equals. Each one of us observes the other, because each companion can turn out to be a traitor. . . . Only in solitude does one venture to be.

> By repudiating Malinche—the Mexican Eve, as Orozco presents her in his mural in the Preparatory School—the Mexican breaks his chains with the past. He wants to be neither Spanish nor Indian. Neither does he want to be descended from them. He negates them. He does not think of himself as a half-breed but as an abstraction—a man.

It's a somber view, oddly related in some of its implications to Graham Greene and D. H. Lawrence—but given perspective in the affirmation of Paz's writings as a whole. It's a courageously honest statement, too; and were it not for this dominant quality in the Mexican intellectuals, I might fear that they would resent whatever insights my regrettably slight but happy acquaintance with them has afforded.

14 DAY OF THE BULLS

Carlos, the Novillero*—Psychology of the Young Hopefuls—A Missing Lighter and Shaver—Farewell Appearance of a* Matador*—Chamaco's Daring and Goring—"La Golondrina"—Capetillo Tries Everything—Reflections on the Art of Killing—Theft of a Spare Tire—Epilogue*

February 19

It began last night about 9:00 o'clock, when Maia came back from Tlaxcala with three young would-be bullfighters. She had been that herself long before we came to Mexico. She had seen Manolete in 1942, and last summer had "followed the bulls" all over Spain. But very likely the compulsion dates earlier, from the time in Poland just before the war when her father, the late Marshal Pilsudski's aide-de-camp and one of the first Polish airmen, dropped her as a child of ten in a parachute—an experience which, instead of traumatizing her for life as it would many, made her want to live dangerously. But it's not easy to become a bullfighter, especially for a woman; and a *gringa* in Mexico, and in her late twenties, has that many more *barreras* to leap.

One of the boys, Carlos, was a *novillero* who had fought many bulls in small provincial rings; but the other two, like Maia, were looking for their first dangerous encounter. One, Antonio, claimed to be a distant cousin of the painter Orozco, and like Orozco he wore tortoise-shell glasses with thick lenses. The other was short, handsome, and silent. The four of them had already driven to Tlaxcala in our jeep several weeks ago, where, in a small village called Benito Juárez, the proprietor of a ranch had promised them a contract to fight *novillos* without horses during the festival. This man, whose name was García, had said that he would sign them up officially in the evening but had been delayed getting home, so rather than make the long trip to Tlaxcala again the following day, they had spent the

night with a typically hospitable family of Mexican farmers. There had been a lot of ceremonial drinking of *tequila*, and in the course of it Maia had asked the boys why they found it necessary to fabricate so many stories of their important connections and daring exploits. All of them finally agreed that they had been lying outrageously. But one of them had added: "All Mexicans are liars; we mean it when we say things like that, but other Mexicans are not taken in." When García showed up in the morning, he, too, had been more than evasive.

Yesterday, when the four hopefuls had returned to Benito Juárez, Maia had insisted that this time a telegram be sent to inform García in advance of their coming. Carlos, the most serious of the three, who sleeps on a park bench because his family has disowned him, and with whom Maia practices cape work in Chapultepec, assured her that he had used the ten *pesos* she gave him to send the wire. But when they arrived in Tlaxcala and found no one expecting them, he confessed he hadn't sent it, or had misaddressed it—it wasn't clear which. He had also promised to bring a sword, for Maia had been offered the chance to fight and kill a half-breed five-year-old bull slated for slaughter; but he came without one. She had gotten mad and told them what she thought of their dishonesty with her, but they had reassured her of their honorable intentions. They secured García's promise of the contract. Their bulls were to be bought from the superior Piedras Negras ranch, and the only expense, 300 *pesos* for rental of a *traje campero*, would be defrayed in part or in whole by the traditional contribution placed in the hat of the fighter by the person to whom the bull would be "dedicated." They had returned in the rain to Mexico, singing *mariachi* songs—"La Paladrina," "Corazón," "La Peregrina"—and arrived here in high spirits. The combination of rain and dust, which had been blowing north from Lake Texcoco's dry bed, had made the cape work which they planned to do in the moonlit pastures out of the question.

Over a bottle of *Bonampak* rum, the singing continued for several hours in our apartment. I joined in it for a while, and then went to bed. All three of the boys, though in appearance rough characters, with their boots and leather jackets, impressed me as gentlemen—a word that one would not be likely to apply

to Americans of similar age and background. Their manners were excellent. They had none of the affectation of smart talk and foul language one would expect from, say, three American would-be boxers. When Maia asked them to sing a particular song for me, they did so unaffectedly, first with a little shyness and then uninhibitedly, in a manner that was most engaging. As I was saying goodnight to them, I reached out to take my Zippo lighter, which they had all been using and which was lying on the table with the glasses. But suddenly I thought: if I do, they may think I'm afraid I won't get it back. So I left it lying there.

This morning, when I went to shave, I looked for my Schick Electric in the bathroom. It was gone. The lighter was gone too. There was no doubt that one of the boys who, Maia recalled, had spent a long time in the bathroom just before leaving, had taken the shaver, and probably the lighter as well. She was furious. She would give up bullfighting then and there, she swore, and report the boys to the police too. I urged her to wait. Carlos had promised to go with her to the *corrida* in the Plaza de México this afternoon. I'd go, too, and have it out with him. But, meanwhile, why not phone him at the home of a friend where he receives calls and get his explanation—if he had one? She called him, and he promised to meet us at the ring. Regarding the missing articles, he expressed surprise and indignation. "It must have been Antonio," he said, "because his parents have plenty of money and never give him a cent, which accounts for the bad habit he has of picking things up wherever he goes." All these young *toreros*, Maia explained, are so dedicated to their art—Spaniards and Mexicans do not regard bullfighting as a sport—that they live it totally, refusing to let anything stand in its way and accommodating themselves to the morals of the robbers, petty racketeers, pimps and con men who dominate all but the top *matadors*.

After playing tennis at the French Club, we picked up the Demarests in Coyoacán and drove to the stadium. Seating 50,000, the Plaza de México is the largest bullring in the world. It was sold out for the farewell appearance of Fermin Rivera, the No. 1 Mexican *torero* since the retirement of Aruza. Young Chamaco, whom Maia had much admired in Spain last summer but who was having a poor season in Mexico, and Manuel Capetillo, who

fights with real artistry though he spends much of his time singing in nightclubs or over the radio, completed the card.

Carlos arrived—with the missing lighter but without the Schick. He had visited the home of Antonio, who was out. Being unwilling to mention his friend's lapse to his parents, he had spied the lighter on a table and pocketed it when they weren't looking. He promised to pay for the razor himself if unable to obtain it tomorrow. I told him to forget it. But Don and I insisted that if the forthcoming *corrida* at Benito Juárez was to be consummated, we wanted to *see* the contract first. Carlos agreed, and tried to talk Maia into taking on a *novillo* with blunted horns, which she indignantly refused to consider.

This afternoon's fight was a good one. It was a foregone conclusion that the crowd would be with its retiring idol, Rivera, unless he completely disgraced himself. But Chamaco was on trial. Don and I, who sat together, thought he acquitted himself heroically. They say that he isn't a great fighter—not yet, anyway—relying on tricks and daring stunts to please the crowd. But he was in great form this afternoon and "made a bad bull look good," as they say, taking it with the *muleta* held behind him and very close. One of the paradoxes of bullfighting is that a "good" bull is one that has been bred to charge straight without swerving. The famous *Miuras* of Spain are said to be as undeviating as express trains, and one of the reasons why so many of the Mexican bulls are "bad" (i.e., smart, shifty, and inclined to hook right or left unexpectedly) is that Mexico's high tariff on importing cattle has caused a weakening in the local strain of *toros bravos*. It was obvious that Chamaco was doing everything he could to win over the contemptuous, anti-Spanish crowd. The nationalistic Mexicans recently booed the brilliant Litri and awarded him only one ear in a performance that was said to be sensational; and Don, when he had cheered another hated Spaniard several years ago, had had his jaw broken by an *aficionado* in the row in front of him. It was obvious too, today, that Chamaco was courting real danger.

Suddenly it happened. One more daring *natural* with his back to the bull, and the bull stopped quickly, turned, and gored "The Kid" in the thigh. He lay in the dust while his assistants waved the beast frantically away. They started to carry

Chamaco off, but he broke from them, limped back, and after a couple of efforts, during which he seemed on the verge of fainting, finally made his kill. Was he awarded an ear? Oh, no! Don and I applauded so loudly and so long that finally enough joined in to permit him a limping tour of the ring, but that was all.

Two minutes later the packed bowl was reverberating to "*Olés*" for what looked to me like some pretty routine cape work by Rivera. (Chamaco must be hearing it, too, I thought, unless the poor fellow is in an ambulance.) Rivera's bull showed a lot of fight, and Rivera, though he seemed to be playing to the stands by making his first passes with the *muleta* on one knee, did give a fine exhibition with eight or nine consecutive left-handed passes. The animal was so tired from this exertion that it fell to its knees. Rivera had a lot of trouble squaring it for the kill, but when he did the shoulder blades were open, and he came in *over* the horns (unlike Chamaco, who had lunged from the side and probably punctured a lung) for a single, perfectly executed deep thrust. The crowd went wild. Rivera was awarded the ears and tail.

A friend completed the symbolism of the *matador's* retirement by striding into the ring and cutting off his pigtail. A dozen white doves were released. And as Rivera finally made his exit, surrounded by a knot of admirers, friends, ex-*matadors* (including his predecessor as *Numero Uno*), relatives, managers and photographers, the band struck up "La Golondrina" and the Mexican on my right, overcome with sentiment, began to cry.

In the fading light, with the arc lamps on the perimeter illuminating the bloody sand, the trampled bouquets of gardenias, and the circling doves, Capetillo played out his anticlimactic final bull bravely. The rich customers had left the *sombra* half deserted, and the *sol* was still buzzing distractedly over Rivera's triumph. Capetillo tried everything to engage their attention. He looked at the public while executing his most daring maneuvers on one knee. They ignored him. Flying newspapers and beer cups blocked the view. He dropped to both knees, chasing the reluctant bull that way half across the ring for his second pass. But by the time the tired creature had sunk to the ground weakly for the third time, and had been revived

for the kill with pokes in the ribs, there were a hundred kids in the ring and one couldn't see either beast or man.

I learned later that Capetillo failed to cut an ear, despite a performance eclipsing Rivera's, because of an old failing. He's a clumsy swordsman. In the "moment of truth," he falters. Though the bull was half dead and presented a perfect target, he couldn't kill it. As we walked out to the crowd's derisive whistling, Capetillo joined Chamaco in my thoughts.

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Why is bullfighting so hard to think straight about? Or describe honestly? The first time I wrote the paragraphs above they were full of the sort of technical jargon—*veronicas, faenas, coletas,* etc.—that makes the amateurs who have written the recent literature on the subject sound as if they were professionals—to other amateurs. Another trap that I doubt I've avoided is making it all sound easy. Why, for instance, did I write that Rivera made a "single, perfectly executed deep thrust"? Obviously I wouldn't have been aware of it if the thrust had been less than perfect. Moreover, the vocabulary of clichés always gives the impression that the knowing author (from a safe position) was enjoying himself. Well, I was and I wasn't. The ambiguity can't be disguised.

As I discussed the experiences of the day with Goeritz tonight, he told me of taking Henry Moore to his first bullfight. After three or four animals had been butchered in front of their ringside seats, Goeritz noticed that the English sculptor was looking back into the stands rather than ahead. " 'Does it make you sick, Enrique?' I asked him. 'Not sick,' Moore replied, 'but do you see that woman up there with the expression of exalted fascination on her face? Mathias, how would you like to be married to a woman like that?' " Goeritz went on to say that he, personally, couldn't bring himself to kill a bull, any more than he could bring himself to kill a man. He asked me what I thought about it.

I admitted my mixed feelings: enjoying it at the moment, hating it (and myself) in retrospect. I told him about a fight I

had gone to in November. All the *toreros* on that occasion—Rivera and Rodriguez from Mexico, Chamaco and Litri from Spain—had been first rate. But the bulls, after a thorough going-over from the *picadors* and *banderilleros*, had refused to fight. As a result, the *matadors* had not taken the risk of getting in very close and had made their kills listlessly. A Mexican next to me chuckled pleasurably when one of the bulls that had become a pincushion tried with bewildered rage to shake out the pins. "*Ah! Que bravo este toro!*" But when the animal failed to do more than capsize a padded horse, he had shouted, "*Impotente!*"

Maia's explanation of bullfighting is that it is a Spanish (not Latin American) celebration of death. The Spaniard, she says, has an almost pathological fear of death, and it is because of his need to conquer that fear that he comes to the ring, where death is the outcome. But the bull is the symbol of death, and since death cannot die, it is the fight that becomes all-important, while the actual kill is anticlimactic, "unless, of course, it's a perfect kill, in which case it becomes a thing of esthetic beauty." Each Spanish *aficionado* thus faces symbolically the thing he fears most, and being personally involved, takes pride (or feels shame, depending on the outcome). The bull's unique function, she believes, is to die in the ring and, before he dies, to try to kill. "Therefore it would be illogical to want to deny him either his destiny or his impulses. How can pity or cruelty be involved in anything so inevitable?"

Only when I regret that my soul isn't Spanish (or Polish), and that I can't stomach the "esthetics" of death or the "destiny" of bulls to be targets, does Maia offer a more practical defense of the cruelty involved. The same bull in a slaughterhouse, she says, would have no chance at all. It's a common defense. The fact is that the bull there is killed instantly with a single blow on the head. But the torture of the beast in the ring—the last *matador* yesterday struck his bull fifteen times with the sword before it finally crumpled—is not the real point. The real point, for me, is the degradation of those who watch. I ask myself what it is that holds my interest up to the last kill, and I have to admit that it's the secret hope of seeing the bull's tormentor killed, or at least tossed in the air.

February 20

This morning (or last night) our fifth wheel and spare tire were stolen, from inside the locked station wagon. Maia noticed it on her return from Chapultepec Park, to which she had driven to practice passes with Carlos. She had also spoken to Antonio, thief presumptive of the shaver and lighter. Antonio, of course, denied hotly knowing anything about either. At Carlos's request, she didn't tell him that the lighter had been retrieved in his house. Could there be a connection between these petty larcenies and the latest theft? The wheel was in the car last night and I had locked the car. Either it was taken during the night on Marsella, where the car was parked, or this morning at Chapultepec. The latter possibility seemed unlikely, both because Maia was never far from sight of the car and because the job would have had to be done within sight of hundreds of passers-by. If, then, it had been taken last night, the thief had a key, because the locks are intact. Antonio, or one of the other boys, could easily have made an impression of the key in wax during one of the two trips to Tlaxcala.

One doesn't report such things to the police in Mexico. They wouldn't bother to trace a tire, and even the theft of a whole car doesn't bring action except for a price. As for accusing a mere suspect, like Antonio—who would take a *gringo's* word? Carlos has already suggested the futility of accusing Antonio: "His family has excellent police connections."

Epilogue to This Chapter

Carlos never showed up again for practice in Chapultepec. When Maia phoned to see what had happened to him, she was told that he had left the city "to look for work in the United States."

Maia finally achieved her ambition. After complicated negotiations, she arranged to cape a cow. Cows are more unpredictable, and therefore often more dangerous, than bulls, one in fact having given the great Manolete his worst "*cornada*" while he was practicing here some years back. Cows, once fought, are said to "know Latin," the language having been taught this particular one by Joselito Huerta, a well-known *novillero*, two

days previously. Maia took with her Pepe, a presser in a nearby cleaning establishment who had fought several times and who was always ready to pull out of his wallet a few finger-marked snapshots and a flier announcing his name on the bill of a bullfight he had helped to "finance," though debts accruing from this exploit were keeping him periodically in jail during the time we knew him.

We drove to a bull ranch near the Shrine of Guadalupe, and while Linton Baldwin, an American friend, and I, stood on the wall encircling the ring, Pepe was tossed with each pass he attempted. He explained later that his "honor" did not allow him to sidestep the cow which invariably charged straight at him. Maia, having no such scruples, didn't give the cow this advantage and acquitted herself most creditably, shouting at us that if she had a *muleta* instead of the cape, she would have to take her chances or be forever disgraced. She said afterward that she felt an "insane fear," manifesting itself in a choking dryness of the throat, that symptom which is said to have never in history permitted a bullfighter to spit as he faced the bull—though some go to the trouble of taking a mouthful of water while safely behind the *barrera* in order to squirt it through the teeth nonchalantly as they step into the ring.

Not satisfied with this, Maia jumped out of her seat at an *espontáneo* during a *novillada* at El Toreo which I didn't attend the following Sunday. She was stopped in the *colejón* but received an ovation from the *sol* patrons and a picture in a newspaper. A few days later she told me that she had bribed a guard with a bottle of *tequila* and fought in a moonlit pasture, making one pass, sighting from far, that made her happy enough to give up all thought of further efforts, at least in Mexico. As a memento of her experiences, she bought a handsome second-hand *traje de luces* in the Thieves' Market, including one of the tricornered, brocaded black hats the *matadors* wear, an expensive item. The hat was soiled and Pepe offered to clean it for nothing. This was a week before our departure from Mexico. Pepe was not seen again at the cleaner's by the time we left. Neither was the hat!

15 TAMAYO AND HIS CRITICS

A Blue House in Coyoacán—An Artist's Collection—Feud with a Collector—Second Visit to the Tamayos—Opinions of Rivera and Siqueiros—Misunderstandings—Third Visit: We Discuss Orozco—"Telephonitis"

February 21

Rufino Tamayo, at fifty-eight, is the living Mexican painter most esteemed—outside of Mexico. Of course, there are Mexicans who agree that the great colorist and stylist deserves that ranking, but their dissenting opinion is rarely heard and almost never seen in print. Tamayo's character may have contributed as much to his unpopularity in Mexico as his consistent refusal to make propaganda. He is proud and sometimes truculent. He lives a good part of the year in New York, numbering among his friends socialites and millionaires. The prices of his canvases, for Mexicans, are prohibitive, and he does not paint murals any more unless well paid for it.

I hadn't seen Tamayo since almost ten years ago in New York, and I wasn't sure that he would remember me. I therefore asked Antonio Souza to take me out to his house. We had an appointment for this morning, but when Antonio checked to make sure the Tamayos were home, he found that the painter and his wife were out and not expected back until 5:00. "*La gloria . . .*" said Antonio, with a rueful smile, replacing the receiver.

But at 5:00, when we arrived at the Tamayo-blue mansion on Calle Malintzin, the painter was as hospitable as one could possibly wish. The interior, carried out in the same subtle, pastel tonalities, is very sophisticated and beautiful, and so is the big tropical garden, with its monumental Aztec sculptures. The artist's studio occupies one of two modern-style bungalows which Tamayo has built along the far wall. The painter had just

finished a picture in magnificently coruscating blues which he calls "Happy Ghosts"—"The first picture I've ever painted entirely with the palette knife"—and had set aside a partially completed one entitled "Claustrophobia," to begin work on a third. All three will be in his next show, opening in Paris.

I had been hearing so much about Tamayo's squabbles with the social realists by this time that, when I asked him about them, I anticipated his answers. He is bitter about the domination of the Mexican art scene by Siqueiros and Rivera but too sure of himself to show it by raising his voice. (His conversational tone and his expression were sometimes at odds.) Antonio had already told me that Cuevas had offended Tamayo by his youthful insolence and independence, so I wasn't surprised when Tamayo, though admitting that Cuevas "is the only one of that generation with real talent," found his macrocephalic monsters "a tiresome formula."

"Let's talk about you," he said. He had seen a review I had written for *The New York Times* of a new book on Mexican painting by Bernard Myers. I had mentioned that Dr. Myers gives scant attention to Tamayo's work, on the ground that it falls outside the Mexican tradition.

"Is this Dr. Myers a Communist?" Tamayo asked. I said I had no idea.

He changed the subject. "I'm not sure that I agree with you," he said, "about Matisse being the most overesteemed of modern painters. I feel that way about Léger."

"How so?"

"I've never been able to look at a Léger with pleasure. The forms are disagreeably bulbous, without any real plastic value at all—for me."

"I thought for a moment you might be describing the Mexicans," I said.

He smiled grimly. "Only Orozco, often in spite of his subject matter, was a real painter."

Olga Tamayo, just back from a swim at Cuernavaca, came in at this point. She spoke at once of our two brief meetings in New York in 1946, at which time I had persuaded Robert Goldwater to write his monograph on Tamayo for Quadrangle Press.

I mentioned Goldwater. "We call him 'Cold Water,' " Tamayo said.

Olga Tamayo is still a beautiful and striking-looking woman, vivacious, quick-witted and, no doubt, as they say, a dynamo of ambition when it comes to promoting her husband among the rich and powerful of three continents. That side of her I didn't see.

We went on a tour of the house. The Tamayos take great pride in their pre-Columbian collection, not the largest in Mexico but probably the most discriminating. Olga is not a Zapotec Indian like Rufino, but she is from Oaxaca too and "has plenty of Indian blood on her mother's side of the family," Rufino said. The Zapotecs are renowned traders, which may account for the Tamayos' pride in the low prices they've paid for their treasures, though God knows it's a natural failing among all collectors, myself included. I admired especially several huge painted pottery vases in the form of women shaped like hourglasses. "We bought them in Tehuantepec twenty-five years ago for one *peso* each," Rufino said. Antonio was awed by two superb primitive religious paintings. "We got them in Lagunilla [the Thieves' Market]," Olga said, "one for 100 *pesos* and the other for only 300." The wall behind their bed was covered with several dozen children's paintings which Rufino had collected, he said, while directing the visual-education program in Mexico in the early thirties. Other primitives, in the dining room, were equally outstanding of their kind. Among the scores of pre-Columbian statuettes, I singled out an amazing Nayarit representation of a *pelota* court, with dozens of miniature figures in clay playing or seated on the walls. The National Museum had sent it to him, Tamayo said. "They couldn't afford the several thousand *pesos* its finder wanted, so they turned it over to us, knowing that our collection will be housed there eventually."

Olga wanted us to see her jewel collection before we left. She brought it out in a sumptuous leather case, explaining that a friend in New York had shown it to her when shocked one day to see her shopping with an ordinary Mexican basket; and that Rufino had then bought it for her. Among its treasures was a hammered golden bird with a wingspread of more than two inches. She had bought if from a dealer in New York after first

taking it to an expert at the Metropolitan and being assured that only the smaller Guatemalan gold pendants could be successfully copied.

On the way out, I made bold to ask Rufino for his side of the feud with Dr. Carillo Gil, but before I come to that, here is what the collector had to say—a conversation which I have withheld from Chapter 11.

* * *

Inés Amor, who was with me, had already told me that Dr. Carillo Gil had sold his several dozen Tamayos, the only extensive Tamayo collection in Mexico, and probably the finest anywhere. I asked the collector why he had sold them. His explanation was far from clear. "Tamayo had written me several offensive letters and I decided I didn't want to own the paintings of such a man." Nevertheless, Dr. Carillo still considers Tamayo, as does Inés Amor, among the world's great artists, and even held out from this sale-of-principle a few of the early temperas, one of which he showed me.

"I bought most of then," Inés said, "and sold them at very great profit, for which Rufino reproached me bitterly until I said to him, 'Rufino, you forget that I am a dealer. My business is to sell and buy paintings. Had you had an agreement with Carillo Gil, had the pictures been even partly yours, that would be a different matter.' He finally saw the point and we are still friends."

"But why did he alienate Dr. Carillo Gil in the first place?" I asked.

"Rufino alienates everyone in Mexico sooner or later," she replied. "It may arise from the fact that he alone of the major painters came from a humble background. As a child, you know, he used to help his mother sell fruit in the Zócalo. Instead of being proud of this, as you or I would, he seems to have a compulsion to live it down. On the social level he wants to deny his roots entirely. I remember an incident back in 1940 when I was in New York with Covarrubias and Caso helping to assemble the 'Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art' show for the Museum of Modern Art. Tamayo was given a small part in it; and I finally got an invitation for him (but not for Olga) to the official ban-

quet. He clung to my skirts like a child, begging me to introduce him to the Rockefellers and the Lewisohns. Now that he knows people like that he is happiest in their company."

The conversation, from which I omit both Inés Amor's more personal observations and Dr. Carillo Gil's psychiatric excursions, was as revealing of the collector and the dealer as of the artist; and I discovered later that Dr. Carillo's relations with Siqueiros and Rivera are hardly better, though he hasn't dumped their pictures on the open market. Once, for example, the collector approached Siqueiros at a public meeting, handed him a plate with two huge fish heads on it, and said: "Paint these!" Siqueiros, who is said not to relish taking the losses that selling to Dr. Carillo Gil entails, accepted the plate but said nothing. Months passed. Then one day, it seems, Siqueiros did remember the fish heads and painted one of his finest still lifes. It hung in a retrospective show of Siqueiros's work with a note attached, indicating that it had been sold before the show opened. When the collector arrived, he immediately spotted the picture—and the tag. Then he saw the artist, stomped past him without a word, and slammed the door.

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Rufino's blue eyes glinted and hardened when I asked him why Dr. Carillo Gil had sold his pictures.

"For the profit, of course," he said. "I sold him the pictures at very low prices, since we were friends, and since he assured me they would become part of a public Mexican collection some day. When I accused him of telling unpleasant and untrue stories about me, he got mad and wrote me violent letters. Then he began selling the pictures, at enormous profits, with Inés Amor's help, to rich collectors in South America."

As Antonio and I were leaving, the servants carried in a green iron park bench some fifteen feet long that might have been made in the Díaz era. Rufino and Olga were discussing where to place it among the orange trees and giant cacti when the gates clanged shut. Olga, I felt sure, would have the last word. She had said to me, when Rufino was out of the room with Antonio, "He can never make up his mind about anything.

He always finds something wrong, like this property in Cuernavaca, for instance, and the house there I want him to buy, which will look like a great bargain even ten years from now."

"He surely can decide in his paintings!" I said, thinking of the superb portrait of her in blues and blacks, with a highlighted silver clock, upstairs.

"Yes, in his paintings," she agreed.

February 24

Lunch with the Tamayos at their home. Olga has bought the house in Cuernavaca. "It's an excellent investment," she told Maia, "and we've been warned repeatedly that it's not safe to put all our money in banks here. But already Rufino wants to sell it."

Tamayo overheard their conversation and said to me: "It's a good property, but the house would cost a fortune to put in order, and how often would we use it? Either we're in our New York apartment, or traveling, or here in Coyoacán. I'd have to give up this house; and that I'd never do."

The third guest was a tall, elegantly attired and coiffeured older lady of English birth and American citizenship whose divorced husband is the editor of one of the big fashion magazines. She wants to buy the house. But during lunch in the garden, real estate was not mentioned. The first half hour was taken up with a discussion of movie stars whom the Tamayos call by their first names, like Gary Cooper; and of others whom they had met in Hollywood homes and nightclubs and (to the consternation of the natives) not recognized at all. "Rufino and I *never* go to the movies," Olga said, ". . . like Marilyn Monroe." The second half hour's talk revolved about homosexuals and lesbians—what makes them the way they are, what nightclubs in Mexico they frequent, and why spitefulness makes them dangerous friends.

Olga and her friend had to go into town. Maia went with them. Rufino and I, at my suggestion, went to the studio to talk. "How do you account for the fact," I asked him on the way out, "that Diego is getting so chummy? I read the report of his speech in the paper this morning which quotes him as saying (in response to a question about you, from the floor): 'In the Sung

gardens all flowers must live. Tamayo is one of the flowers of Mexican painting.' "

"I read it," Tamayo said with a disparaging laugh. "Diego's public attitude toward me is undergoing a change. But don't make the mistake of thinking this has anything to do with art! It's political. When he was in Moscow last summer—Diego told me this himself—he ran into Ilya Ehrenbourg at a party, and the Russian novelist said to him: 'Your painting is very strong, of course, but I wouldn't be honest if I didn't tell you that Tamayo is the only Mexican painter of world stature today.'

"I wouldn't be at all surprised," Tamayo added grimly, "if they gave me a formal invitation to join the Party next. As a matter of fact, a Party member came up to me at a gathering last week, rubbing his hands and saying unctuously, wouldn't I 'just for once' show my friendliness by introducing a 'comradely symbol' in a picture, like, say, a clenched fist or a red flag?"

"Why are they playing up to you?" I asked.

"I'm not sure. It's connected with the 'new look,' the anti-Stalin campaign, the relaxed attitude toward the West and the satellites—at least before Poland and Hungary took advantage of it and got crushed. Perhaps Ehrenbourg told Diego that public attacks on fellow artists don't endear art to the masses."

"But why does Siqueiros continue to belabor you in the press?"

"Perhaps he's been more stung by what I've been quoted as saying about his work."

"Such as—?"

"That his symbols are religious rather than social—and dripping with sentimentality."

"Religious?"

"What's the difference between Siqueiros' Mothers, bowed tearfully over their martyred proletarian Sons, and the Christian Pietà? Or between his tortured Cuauhtémocs and the tortured Christs and saints?"

"But is this resemblance of symbols wrong—if he believes in it?"

"That's just the point. None of them believe in it. The way they paint is proof. Thirty years ago, in the Preparatory School, or at Chapingo, there was belief—and a certain freshness—in

their forms. But what have they been doing since, these great pioneers? Just sleeping on their laurels. What they paint today is exactly what they painted then—only more vulgar."

"You can't deny that Siqueiros, at least, changes his techniques—"

"So he uses Duco? And how does he use it? Exactly like oil. The effect is the same, only harsher. Is that inventing? But what I really object to is not their bad painting, which hurts no one but them. What I object to is their dictatorship over public taste, government patronage, and the souls of the young artists."

"Does the public really go for social realism?" I asked.

"That's another of the paradoxes," he replied. "The public, the masses for whom they think they're painting, call their figures *monotes*—monkeys. Actually, their kind of painting got its first pats on the back not here at all but in the United States, where taste in the late twenties and early thirties was still too undeveloped to appreciate the great French masters.

"In France," he went on, "whoever has talent is recognized. Here, under this dictatorshop of Rivera and Siqueiros, it is just the opposite. Anyone showing a spark of originality is immediately denounced and ostracized. Abstract painting sells well in the United States; the United States dropped the Atomic Bomb; therefore the abstract painter hates humanity! Mexico *still* doesn't recognize Carlos Merida. They call him a 'Guatemalan' after he's been living and painting here thirty years. Why? Because he has something different and personal to say, and is subtle about the way he says it. They drove Jean Charlot out because he didn't quite conform to their 'Renaissance' taste—"

"Renaissance—Italian or Mexican?"

"Italian. It's one of the worst things about Mexican painting, this slavish dependence on the styles of the Italian Renaissance fresco painters. Look at Diego's short strokes, his crowded, anecdotal compositions, his portraits and self-portraits. And Siqueiros—the way he falls back on the baroque perspective of Mantegna and Tintoretto—or on the pretentious official painting of J.-L. David! What's the difference between Napoleon in his coronation ermines and Cuauhtémoc in his armor and feathers? And these are the men who call themselves one hundred per cent Mexican . . ."

February 28

The Tamayos had dinner with us last night, along with a talented young American painter, Frank Gonzales, and his wife and the Demarests. The occasion was somewhat clouded by a case of fancied slight and prideful silence involving the two painters. There was also a conversational review of the relationship of Tamayo and Rico Lebrun when they were unneighborly neighbors at San Miguel several years ago—resulting from an almost identical misunderstanding. The fact that these feuds are so frequent among artists arises, I'm sure, out of the lack of real status they have in modern society and the fierce independence with which they try to make up for it. The party terminated smoothly, however, with Rufino showing a lighter side of his nature by amusing Beebe (who had put in an unexpected appearance in her nightgown) with smoke balloons made out of paper napkins tied at the four corners and lit with a match.

* * *

I resumed my conversation with Tamayo at his home this morning.

He asked me whether I considered Cézanne or Orozco the better painter. I said Orozco, unhesitatingly. He shook his head. "Even though Cézanne has never been one of my favorite painters, I see no comparison. The *way* Orozco paints doesn't express his time adequately. First he was painting like a Florentine; then he was influenced by German Expressionism."

"So what?" I said. "You wouldn't deny that you've been influenced by pre-Columbian painting, and by Picasso, would you?"

"Pre-Columbian sculpture," he corrected me. "But it's one thing to be influenced by folk arts when they're a real part of your very life, and another to go out like an archeologist or curio hunter and copy them directly for their picturesqueness or political significance."

"Surely Orozco didn't do that," I said.

"Not Orozco. But the others. O'Gorman, for instance, with his University Library mosaics, a picturesque piece of research

if I've ever seen one, covering up the architecture like a piece of Christmas gift wrapping."

(O'Gorman had been just as forthright in telling me why he felt the art of Tamayo was too "*empalagoso*" (cloying). "It's too much *dulce*—perfumery? He is intellectualizing a sensuous quality, gifted though he is. Only the early paintings have bones. The French-influenced ones are like Debussy's music to one, like myself, who prefers Bach.")

"But to come back to Orozco," I said.

"His Mexicanism," Rufino said, "is at least more authentic than that of the painters who paint for the tourist. Mexico has had a tragic history. I recognize Orozco's response to that tragedy as a real response. But painting today must be more than a response to history. It must partake of the revolutions in form and science going on in all the highly developed countries. One must invent new forms, by means of poetic insight, to express this new way of looking at the world. Poor Orozco! When the big Picasso show came here a few years ago (over the furious protest of the social realists) even Orozco felt he must say: 'Who is Picasso?' "

My glance strayed to the canvas on which Rufino was working. Characteristically daring in color and design, it depicted the usual pin-headed marionette—this time with tiny black telephone receivers held to each ear.

"What are you calling it, Rufino?" I asked.

" 'Telephonitis,' " Tamayo said.

Orozco's images—the anguished revolutionist with hands clasped over his face, the compassionate Franciscan, Christ destroying his Cross, Prometheus suffering the torments of mankind—raced through my mind.

"The value of painting," Tamayo concluded, "depends exclusively on plastic and poetic qualities."

Aside from the word "exclusively," I couldn't disagree. Nor did I underestimate the beauty of this little picture, or of other more magical ones by Tamayo. It was good that he "knew" Picasso, and had had the courage to be influenced by him. But it was good, too, that Orozco had had the courage *not* to "know" Picasso and to go his own grand way alone, as only he could.

16 GENIUS OR MADMAN?

On the Trail of Goítia—Señora Orozco Is Out—
Covarrubias' Death—The Goítia Legend Grows—
First Trip to Xochimilco—Margarita Orozco Speaks
—Apparition—Back to Xochimilco—The Character
of the Artist—O'Gorman's Dissenting Opinion—
An Hour with Manuel Gamio

March 1

Drove out to Xochimilco this morning with Inés Amor, looking for Goítia. On the way through Coyoacán, we stopped at the home of Orozco's widow. The maid said she would see whether the Señora was in. The maid returned. The Señora was not in. Just at that moment one of the two sons, Alfredo, drove up and said he would go see himself. He is a sallow-complexioned young man with a pleasant, heavy face. He came back to the gate where we were waiting. "If you return at 2:00 o'clock [it was noon], perhaps . . ." It was quite clear that the Señora *was* in. We thanked him and drove away.

Señora Orozco, Inés said, was a simple, middle-class woman whom Orozco had left quite out of his life, rarely taking her to parties or official functions and, when he was abroad, leaving her for years at a time alone with the children. It would have been a miracle if the sons had followed in their father's footsteps; Orozco paid little attention to them or to their education. But when the artist died in 1949, Señora Orozco became a personage —posthumously, as it were. She opened exhibits. She even had a nervous breakdown. We had been given a small demonstration of her sense of importance. In fact, when we returned at 2:00, Alfredo came out again and said: "She is so *very* busy . . . But she will come to the gallery at 5:00, if you like."

We continued on to Xochimilco. As we drove, Inés described the terrible scene at the hospital some weeks ago just before

Covarrubias died. It seems that Rosa, his estranged wife who had just returned to Mexico to block his divorce and impending nuptials with the little dancer, had gone to Diego Rivera for help. She wanted to see Miguel. But Miguel had reentered the hospital on the express condition that Rosa would not under any circumstances be permitted to see him. She wanted him to sign some papers, presumably to insure that she would inherit his priceless pre-Columbian collection. Diego, torn between Rosa and Miguel, as were most of their friends (but not Miguel's brothers, who wanted to see the poor fellow at peace in his last hours), agreed to accompany her. When they arrived, the doctors refused them admittance to the dying man. Diego stormed and shouted, went out and returned with several policemen. But the doctors lined up in a phalanx against the sick man's door and stood firm. Covarrubias, who was said by one doctor to have had no will to go on living—being cognizant of the fact that even the little dancer had begun to play around now that he was an invalid—at least died without having to face again the woman who had humiliated him publicly so often.

We arrived at Goítia's shack only to find that he was in Mexico. We left a note informing him that we'd be back tomorrow at 4:00. On the return ride, Inés told me something of the "mad" painter's recent life. He was acting strangely even at the time Anita Brenner interviewed him for *Idols Behind Altars* in the late twenties. That was after he had returned from a period in Europe and had gone to Teotihuacán at the invitation of Manuel Gamio, the great archeologist, to "identify" himself with Indian Mexico. There he had painted the series of anguished, *sfumato* pictures for the Ministry of Education which includes the famous "Tata Jesucristo." Goítia was already a mystic, to put it most charitably. Someone had once found him in a forest near Oaxaca sitting up to his neck in the muddy waters of a cave. Anita describes him as "pressing his hands together, wringing them slowly as he speaks in the voice of a child." Inés saw him once sitting in rags in the main square of Xochimilco, selling his fabulous drawings to whoever would buy them, for a *peso* apiece. The last time she visited his shack he was sleeping, like John Donne or Queequeg, in his coffin.

Some years before that, he had come to Inés's gallery one

day, announcing that he was starting to paint again. He wanted her help in getting the Ministry of War to commission some frescoes on the Revolution. The War Minister wanted to see some of his work first, so she had gone to the Minister of Education (who hated the Minister of War) and gotten out the Teotihuacán series, on the pretext that an American wanted to photograph them for a book. Then she and Goítia had taken them to the Minister of War. No sooner were they in the Minister's office than the painter opened a large satchel, took out miniature models of trees, waterways, and houses, and began to arrange them on the floor. When asked why he was doing this, he had replied: "What I am really interested in is not painting but town planning. I want you to rearrange the canal system of Xochimilco, like this. . . ."—and he had rambled on for an hour until the Minister of War finally had to have him taken out of the building.

After leaving Inés at her house and having lunch at home—I'm getting into the Mexican habit of having it between 2:00 and 4:00—I drove to the gallery. Señora Orozco and her son Alfredo were already there.

Margarita Orozco, were it not for her olive complexion, might be taken for a retired North American school teacher. Her figure is plump. There is not a line in her face. Her iron-gray hair is well groomed. And behind her prim spectacles are a pair of the most expressionless eyes I have ever seen. She could have been very pretty once.

Orozco, she said, was a good man, very quiet and self-contained. She had seen that from the moment she first laid eyes on him as a girl of fifteen. That had been in Orizaba, whither she and her family had fled "to escape the Revolution." Orozco had been temporarily stationed there with Dr. Atl's group of young artists. Later, in 1920, Orozco had courted her on the buses to and from Coyoacán, where they both then lived and commuted to the city. They were married in 1923, the year the work in the Preparatory School began.

"Who paid for the Preparatory School murals?" I asked her, expecting still another version of the stories I had gotten from Anita Brenner and Lombardo Toledano, and getting one.

"Nobody got paid. My husband didn't care about being paid

so long as he had work to do. Vasconcelos, and no one else, gave them the walls, and Vasconcelos also paid the small salary on which Orozco existed, the salary of a draftsman attached to the Education Ministry.

"When the work was finished," she continued, "—then, as always, Orozco had insisted on absolute freedom to paint what he liked—he went to the United States for the second time. It was on his first visit that the U. S. Customs officials tore up his water colors, calling them 'indecent'—something my husband never forgot. On this second visit he did receive some help, from Alma Reed, among others. But the legend that he was in any way indebted to anyone or influenced is ridiculous."

Inés Amor, who had come in at this point, asked me if I wanted to see a letter Orozco had written her on the subject of Alma Reed.

"My husband," Señora Orozco continued, "never belonged to any political party or religious faith. He believed, politically speaking, only in justice for humanity, and that is the subject of all his murals. When he died, *Time* magazine printed a completely untrue story about his having asked for a priest and taken the last rites as he lay dying. When I protested, they apologized to me privately for having been misinformed but didn't have the decency to acknowledge it in print or publish my letter.

"My husband," she concluded, in her halting but grammatically textbook English, "was not only a good man who loved his family and thought of them constantly, but he was always relaxed at home, always serene, irresistibly humorous, and in every way normal."

As she was leaving with her son, accompanied by Inés Amor, an old man with an unkempt mane and gray-white beard entered and stood tentatively in the doorway fingering his *sombrero*. He was dressed in overalls and a gray canvas work coat. He was thin and stooped and very feeble and delicate; and the dark-brown eyes, deepset in a web of wrinkles in the leathery skin, were as expressive and gentle as any eyes I had ever seen. Realizing that this must be Goítia, I put my arm around him and led him to a chair in the inner studio. Then I told him, in my broken Spanish, how we had visited his home and had been

disappointed not to find him in. He replied that he had come to beg us not to visit his home: "It is so uncomfortable, and the dust is so bad."

I answered that we were most anxious to visit his home tomorrow (as we had said in the note), that we admired his work so much we wanted to see the home of its creator. As for the dust, I added, carried away by my unexpected eloquence in the unfamiliar tongue, "I love dust!"

Goítia smiled sweetly, murmuring, "All right, if you will," and wandered out into the streets again.

March 2

At noon today Maia and Beebe and I picked up Inés Amor and Dr. Carillo Gil, who had never met Goítia but owns several of his drawings which he hoped the artist would sign. The Doctor was dressed in work pants, two sweatshirts, and an old boating cap and carried a carved mountain-climbing cane. For him, evidently, a visit to the suburb of Xochimilco was as hazardous an undertaking as an ascent of Popocatépetl.

This time the old painter was at home. He welcomed us and placed chairs under a piece of corn thatching supported by poles in the yard. As it was beginning to rain and there was a large hole in the thatch, he took a piece of tarpaulin and threw it up to cover the hole. A shower of corn shavings, dust, and chicken droppings enveloped us for a moment. Then he went into the shanty (a series of connecting shacks built out of packing crates and bits of corrugated tin) to look for some photos and letters. I accompanied him and noted the wooden coffin on a long table. It was so covered with boxes that had been gathering dust for years that I doubted whether he could sleep in it. Of course, there might be another in one of the inner recesses we didn't visit. The contents of the rooms I did see reminded me of newspaper photos of the home of the Collier brothers on upper Fifth Avenue, New York, when the last of them had died and the police had hacked their way through the accumulated refuse of half a century with axes.

Goítia, finding what he wanted, threaded his way out and I followed him. It seems that he has a new project, and that Gamio, now chief of Indian Affairs, is backing it. It is to bring

his Teotihuacán paintings out of the Bellas Artes (where only one of them, the "Tata Jesucristo," is to be seen, anyway) and build a museum for them at Xochimilco. Like a typical peasant—up to recently, he told us, he had grown all his own food—Goítia has little by little accumulated small parcels of land, and now he has enough for a museum. Aside from a few pictures in the Museum at Barcelona, Spain, which he painted before and during the 1910 Revolution, the paintings in the Bellas Artes are the only extensive group of Goítias anywhere in the world. As we were leaving, he gave me a photograph of a "fairly recent" self-portrait. It seemed overdramatized and not at all like the pictures he had executed for Gamio at Teotihuacán.

On the way back to the city we discussed the old man's character. Was he sane or crazy? There was a diversity of opinion. Carillo Gil, as a doctor, pronounced him an advanced case of schizophrenia whose lamentable mental condition was probably a result of syphilis. Inés, both as a dealer and as a lover of the arts, regarded him as lost because he no longer produced pictures. Maia, with typical Polish extremism, took the position that he was perhaps the only sane man in the world, leaving those who regarded themselves as sane to lead medically "normal" lives of quiet desperation in business, or to make neurotic drips and squiggles on canvases in their frantic effort to outshock (or outsell) their contemporaries.

My own feeling was that while Goítia is leading a relatively "happy" life and a "good" one, in the sense that he isn't interfering with anyone else's happiness or welfare, as most of us are, he stopped living when he stopped caring enough about human misery and beauty to make an effective statement about it through his particular form of expression: paint. I can't agree with Maia—or Morris Graves—that the hermit or the self-centered mystic is doing more than closing his eyes to the human situation and denying that he has any responsibilities to God or man. All of which, of course, is not to "blame" Goítia in any way for what sickness, physical or mental, has made him; or even for what he has chosen to be if it has been a matter of his own free will.

In painting, his accomplishment is already greater than that of most artists. But as a man, here and now, though his face re-

flects a sweetness that few faces in this age of ruthless pursuit of mean objectives ever achieve, it also records the self-wrapt vacancy of the recluse. He took no interest in Beebe: her world was too far from his. She did not share his obsessions. He was contented that we had come, I suspect, because it gave him another opportunity to ramble on about the various projects that reflect the uncreative afterglow of his dormant or shattered creative will. He was as contented to see us go as he had been to see us come. Nothing in his world had changed, and nothing ever will, until he dies. He didn't even wave as we drove away, but stood there, still smiling angelically. I felt a pang of real grief: for the Goítia who had once lived, suffered, hated, and loved.

March 3

In the morning I stopped in at Juan O'Gorman's and mentioned having visited Goítia. Much to my surprise, he remarked that Goítia was a rich man.

"Rich?" I said.

"Well, you couldn't hang him for several million *pesos*, as you could Tamayo, but 500,000—yes, easily."

"How does he make it?" I asked, incredulous. "And where does he hide it?"

"He keeps it in the banks, and he makes it out of painting, at which he is still very skillful."

"But Inés Amor says—"

"Ah," he chuckled, "Inés no longer gets the paintings. He does much better selling them himself. His personality, that dirty beard, and home, help sell them."

Mexico, Mexico! Whom to believe?

* * *

Manuel Gamio is one Mexican no one can possibly *dis*believe. His character as well as the life that shaped it are completely consistent.

"I used to think," he told me this afternoon in his office at the Inter-American Indian Institute, which he now heads, "that the Nile Valley or the Isles of Greece or Central Italy were the

world's richest archeological beds—but that was before I became acquainted with my own country."

Dr. Gamio's discovery of Mexico began shortly after 1910, the year he received his M.A. at Columbia. A pupil of the late Franz Boas, he had reentered his own country to find it in the throes of its most fundamental revolution. Wisely he decided to express his own break with the stultifying age of Porfirio Díaz in his chosen field. He asked the Madero government for a grant to make a thorough study of the classic, pre-Aztec civilization of the Valley of Mexico in the place where it had flourished, Teotihuacán. He received the grant, though the work didn't start until 1914, when Madero's murderers had been overthrown and Carranza was in power.

Gamio's break with the past was this. Before him, archeology had been either a "theoretical" subject or a "practical" mining of ruins for museums. He divided the study of Teotihuacán into three parts—the early civilization; the fate of its descendants in Colonial times; Teotihuacán today. His staff included not only archeologists but linguists, engineers, doctors, biologists, economists, and artists. Chief among the latter was Goítia, then returned from Spain, and admirably fitted by his shyness and curiosity to make friends with the Indians.

Dr. Gamio, who is in his seventies now but still full of drive, enthusiasm, and optimism, sent a secretary for the three huge volumes in which the findings of the five years' work is embodied. "From this study," he told me, "we deduced the practical means of helping the Indian today. By the time we were through we knew such seemingly unimportant things as the three methods of making *huaraches* (sandals) and the evolution of the *tortilla*."

I asked him for an example of how this research benefited the descendants of the Toltecs.

"I noticed," he replied, "many fine obsidian objects in the diggings. 'Who made them?' I asked the Indians. 'Our fathers,' they replied. 'And why don't you still make them?' 'The stone is too hard. We don't have any tools any longer that will cut it. Besides, we don't know where to find the obsidian.' So, first we rediscovered the quarry for them. Then I bought carborundum

cutting instruments in the United States. Today there are fourteen workshops in the area turning out everything from knives and dental instruments to bracelets and cuff links.

"But more important, perhaps, than any such practical contributions," Dr. Gamio continued, "was what you might call our new spiritual approach to the indigenous population. Since Teotihuacán, we no longer make the mistake of trying to impose our culture on the Indian. We help him develop his own. We recognize that only on the material level is his way of life 'backward'; on the intellectual level (religion, esthetics, ethics, and so on) it is as good or better than our own. We don't interfere—as you saw when you visited our affiliate at San Cristobal—in the intellectual phases of Indian life."

I asked him how much money his parent organization and Dr. Caso's *centros* have to work with.

"At most, 20,000,000 *pesos*," he said. "It compares poorly with the eighty or ninety million *dollars* you spend on the much fewer (400,000) and more isolated Indians in your country. Especially when you consider that the Indians here in Mexico are the base of our whole population and that, instead of trying to segregate them in reservations, we are trying to bring them back gradually into the economic and cultural life of the nation, as perhaps its most creative element. Nor are we making the mistake of forcing urbanization on the Indian. You have possibly noticed that the further from congested city life the Indian lives, the more moral, the more democratic, the more honest, and the more contented he is apt to be.

"Juárez," he continued, "though a full-blooded Indian himself, made the same mistake the United States is making—trying to settle each individual Indian on his own plot of land. In Mexico that policy was catastrophic. Carranza began to return the expropriated *ejidos*, but it was not until Cárdenas that real progress was made. The fact that the revolution has 'succeeded' is in the population figures. In 1910 there were 15,000,000 Mexicans. In 1920, as a result of revolutionary losses of life, 14,000,000. But today there are 32,000,000. This is proof enough that the people now own the land. *They eat.* In 1920 there was barely enough food for the 14,000,000!"

I asked Dr. Gamio to describe Goítia and his role in the

Teotihuacán project. Specifically, was he to be considered (then or now) crazy or diseased?

"Not at all," he answered. "Goítia has always, probably from childhood, been shy, modest, and—as we say here—*raro*, 'extravagant' in his personal habits. I have never known him to be interested in women. I have never seen any signs of disease in him. He has always been lazy. When I sent him to Oaxaca in the twenties he got the idea that he was being persecuted, and lived in a cave for a while, but he got over that. Here's a story that shows why most people think Goítia crazy. During the days of the Teotihuacán project, an American heard of his fame as an artist and asked me how much Goítia would charge for a portrait. I guessed. 'Maybe 5,000 *pesos?*' The American offered 10,000. So I went to Goítia and told him and he was quite unmoved. 'All right,' he said, 'I'll do it. Later.' 'How much later?' I pressed him. 'Well, I'll begin now, and I'll finish it in—maybe ten years?' Needless to say, the portrait was never painted. If Goítia had taken such commissions he'd be quite as rich as Diego is today. You've seen how Goítia prefers to live. But he's as good an artist now as he was then. The last time I saw him was when I was entering the National Theater one day, and here was this man stretched out full length on one of the steps, munching a *tortilla*. Goítia . . ." He shook his head sympathetically.

One of Dr. Gamio's young assistants who conducted me to the door asked me if I was familiar with the work of Father Bernardino de Sahagún, the great scholar who preserved the codexes and legends of the Aztecs shortly after the Conquest. I said I was.

"Well," he said, "they are alike, Fray Sahagún and Dr. Gamio. Both presided at the birth of a new world."

17 FROM THE URNS OF MORELIA TO THE BELLS OF SAN BLAS

Incident of the Road—Morelia and Zalce—The Alameda at Dawn—The Orozcos at Jiquilpan—Chapala and D. H. Lawrence—Guadalajara—The Pro-American Mexican and the Anti-Mexican American—The Road to Nayarit—Tepic and the Huicholes—San Blas and Longfellow—Vignettes of the Beach

March 4, Morelia

Enroute to Guadalajara with Linton Baldwin, a Yale graduate of more recent vintage than mine who starred in tennis and track and has since written several novels involving sports. He flew down on a two-week vacation from Los Angeles, where he is working for an advertising agency.

About halfway between Toluca and here we stopped at a roadside stand for *tacos* and beer. I looked at the gas gauge and it read EMPTY. That means about a gallon and a half in the tank. We had fifty miles still to cover. I asked a Mexican in a Ford pickup whether there were any gas pumps between this spot and Morelia.

"None," he said.

"I'll never make it on a gallon and a half," I said.

He pondered. "Wait! I have a hose." He asked the pretty girl sitting next to him to get out. Removing the seat, he produced a couple of feet of beat-up garden hose. Inserting one end in his tank, he sucked hard on the other, brought up a mouthful of gas and filled a can. We poured the full can into my tank. Thanking him, I pulled out a roll of *pesos*, prepared to pay. He wouldn't accept a *centavo*. It suddenly struck me that Antonio, the boy who made off with the shaver and lighter, probably would have done the same.

Arriving in Morelia, we went to the Escuela de Bellas Artes to meet Alfredo Zalce. The painter was out to lunch and wouldn't be back until 4:30, so we wandered about the city. In a little square facing the Church of the Roses there are ancient trees braided with vines whose roots are as thick as the tree trunks. Bronze effigies of Cervantes and Don Vasco de Quiroga, the noble bishop of Michoacán, face each other in the leafy shade enclosed on all sides by the wonderful palaces of Morelia, with their peach-colored stone and iron balconies. How much has time contributed to their enchantment? I thought of Goeritz when he looked at the cracks already beginning to appear in El Eco and said: "After a hundred years of the Mexican climate, even the ugliest modern building will look beautiful."

We visited the State Museum, which has an indifferent collection of pre-Columbian sculpture. Among the pictures were several landscapes by Velasco, the nineteenth-century artist whom Rivera and O'Gorman admire extravagantly. A mural by Zalce in the stairwell, depicting the usual revolutionary heroes on one side and the enemies of the people on the other, was sentimental as only the work of the less-than-inspired social realists can be.

Zalce himself, whom we found waiting for us at 5:00, is a small man with a hungry look. The hunger is for social justice but doesn't preclude a sense of humor. He is modest about his own work. He'd studied with Rivera, he told us, and he'd watched Orozco paint. He believes that in Mexico, at least, the artist has a responsibility to contribute what he can to relieving the misery of the common people, giving them ideals and hopes to sustain them. That is why, he said, he had accepted this job and come to Morelia to live. "All my students are poor. Last week one came in looking gray in the face and I asked him what was the matter. He said: 'Nothing to eat for two days but a cup of coffee.' If I can occasionally get stipends and scholarships for these students, I feel I am accomplishing something. If I stayed in Mexico and painted what the smart galleries want and can sell to the smart collectors, wouldn't I be betraying this?"—And he pointed to a fresco of Indians throwing themselves on the lances of the royalist garrison at the Alhóndiga. When he is painting his heroes of history, Zalce is competent; but when he tries to

invent symbols he falters badly. The cloud from the Atom Bomb assumes the shape of a serpent with a human face—an ugly face. The result is comic rather than frightening.

After dinner on the square, we went to see a very old and very good American movie, "China Seas," with Glark Gable and Jean Harlow. It is a phenomenon of still class-ridden Mexico that the Indian, in his *serape,* is not to be seen in a theater or restaurant. We were conscious of this uncomfortable feeling of class as we emerged from the lobby with the conventionally dressed citizens. The street was romantically illuminated by clusters of cast-iron *quetzal* birds with bulbs hanging from their distended tongues. Indians along the wall, blankets held over mouths, eyed us sullenly.

March 5, Guadalajara

As we drove away from Morelia, little dust storms swirled on the hillsides, and a swarm of vultures by the roadside burrowed in the body of a dead cow.

I thought of the beauty of Morelia as we had seen it strolling through the Alameda before breakfast. The stately cathedral has received recognition as the paragon of the plateresque, but surely this square is one of the great (and as yet uncelebrated) architectural masterpieces in the Western World. Everything is of a piece. The broad arcades supported by Doric columns give rhythm to the more static façades of the palaces, their wide areas of simplicity accented by the richness of elaborate iron balconies, the rows of delicate brackets, the complex dentiled cornices, the funerary urns of stone profiled against the sky. Small, widely spaced rosettes adorn the architraves and pendants. Corinthian pilasters do not clash with the severer orders beneath them, nor do the window pediments, decorated with stone drapery, ever seem to sag. Gutter spouts two feet long, protruding like cannon (to which in some cases iron-pipe extensions have been added), give another note of serial, brazen discipline to the stone symphony that fills the park. The buildings can be seen only one or, at most, two at a time. The planting of the plaza, and its particular furniture, provide still another harmony. The benches are of stone, very long and pierced in the back by clover-leaf "windows." The bandstand, a gift of Cárdenas' brother Dámaso,

(*above*) Zapatistas riding into capital, 1910. (Archivos Casasola.)

Emiliano Zapata, by Zalce

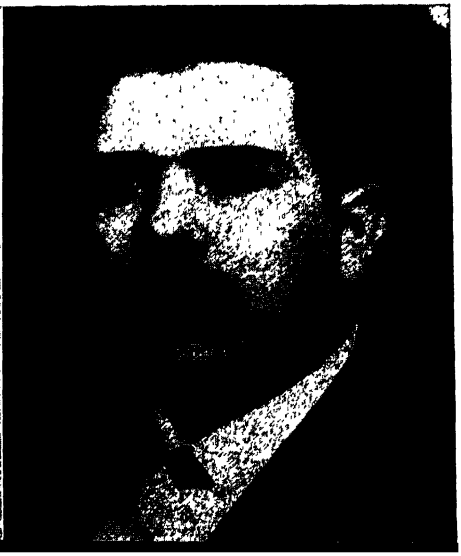
(*below*) Cuauhtémoc conquers the Paseo, and the Continental Hilton Hotel conquers Cuauhtémoc (Photo by Marianne Goeritz.) (*below right*) Zapata Memorial, by Marin

Benito Juárez

Porfirio Díaz

Francisco I. Madero

Lázaro Cárdenas

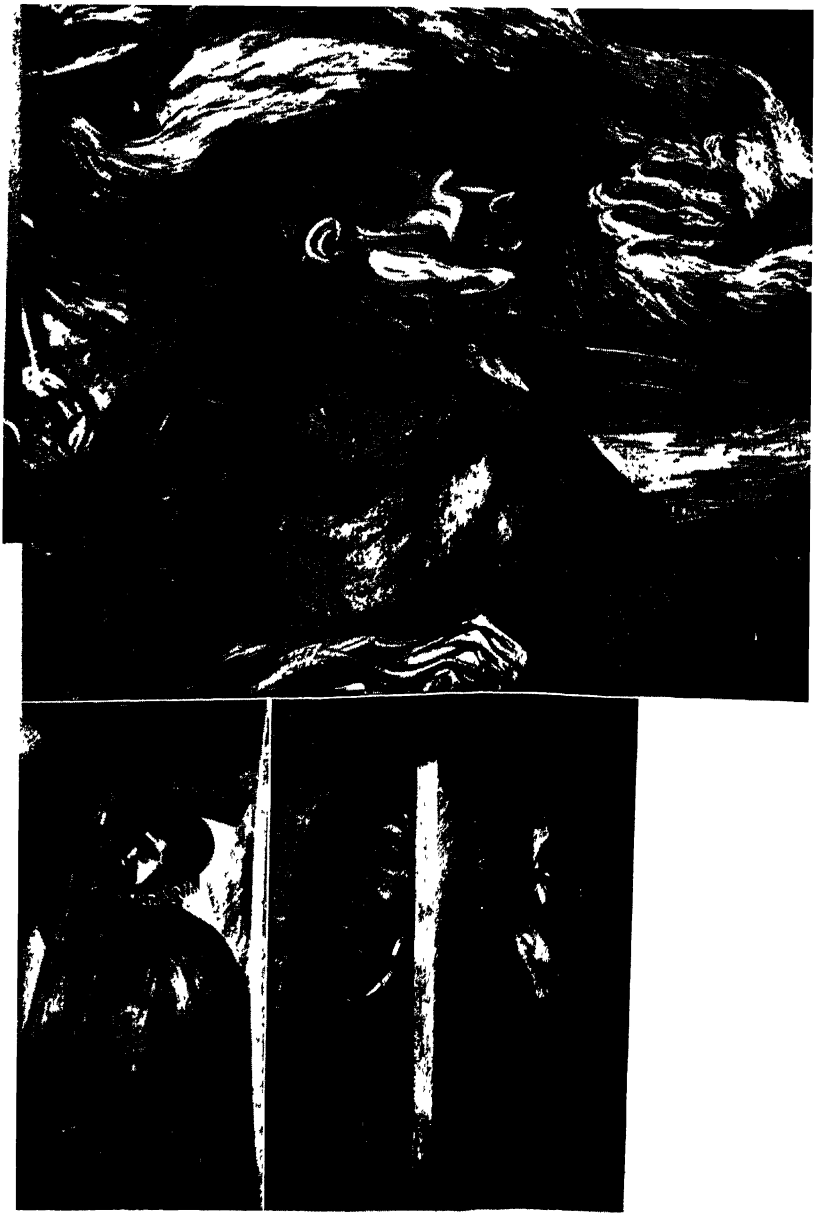


Octavio Paz

Maria Douglas

Vicente Lombardo Toledano

Antonio Souza and Alfonso Reyes



Orozco murals at Guadalajara. (*left*) "Philip II of Spain," Hospicio. (*right*) "Evolution of Guadalajara's Coat of Arms," Hospicio.

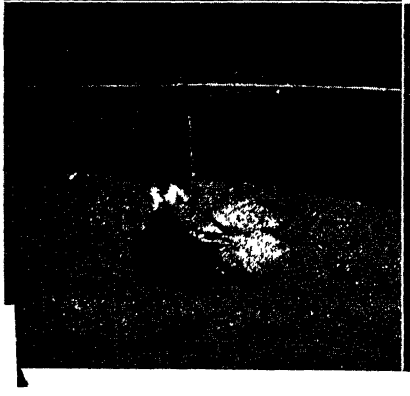
Orozco murals at Guadalajara. (*left*) "Wind," Hospicio dome. (*below*) "Betrayers of the Revolution," University.

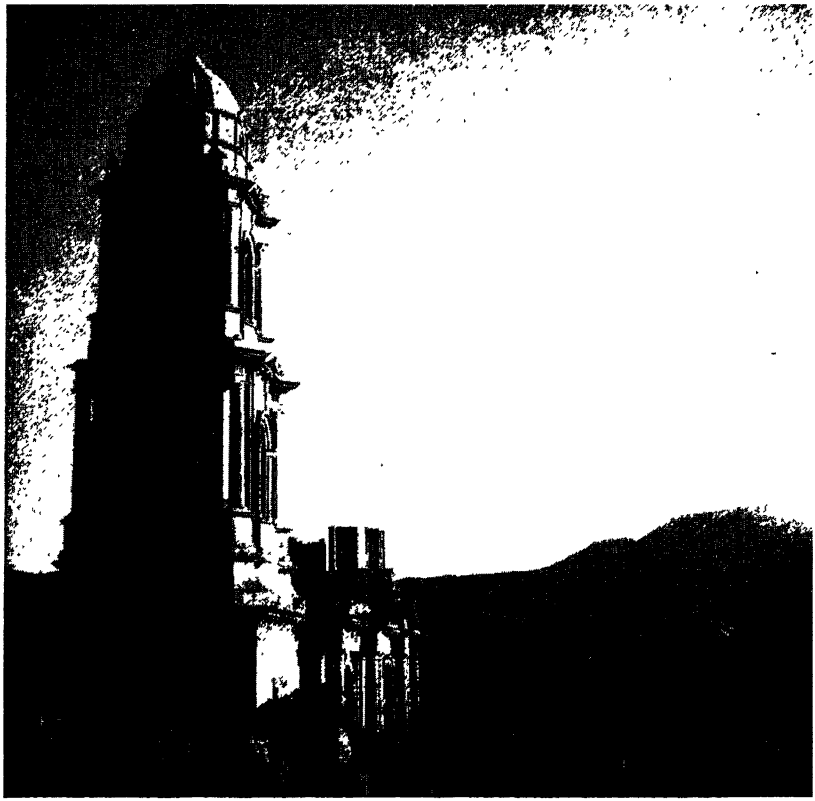
Rufino Tamayo

Francisco Goítia

Rodeo at Ajijic

(*below*) Linton Baldwin on the beach at San Blas (*below left*) Maia and the fighting cow





Parícutin and the buried church of Parangaricutiro

(*left*) Ambiguous symbol (*right*) Homeward bound· Don and June Bloom, Beebe.

Coatlicue Aztec symbol of fertility and death.

who was Governor of Michoacán in 1952, harmonizes perfectly, being constructed of cream-pink slabs like the buildings that surround it. It is encircled by miniature Doric columns, set widely apart and beautifully pitted by the weather. There are just enough trees of every height and shape; just enough flowers. The water in the circular marble basins is black and motionless; and along the borders of the grass beds, cut in elegant patterns, stand rows of very high, square columns crowned by truncated obelisks. The iron lanterns which hang from these columns illuminate—but don't defy—the night.

As we were leaving, a tourist from Texas was loading miniature replicas of these noble lanterns into his trunk compartment; and under one of the arcades an Indian in broad-brimmed, stiff *sombrero*, shod with classic *huaraches* and covered with a *serape* of deep purple and gold, was examining eagerly a stack of American aluminum ware, overalls, and cheap print smocks.

* * *

Arriving at Jiquilpan, Cárdenas' birthplace, about 1:00, we visited the Library. When he was President, Cárdenas had taken over this small chapel, filled it with books, and commissioned Orozco to paint its bare lunettes and apse with scenes of the Revolution. Orozco had responded characteristically. Here was no mood of idealistic exaltation: a soldier toppling into the grave he has been forced to dig for himself; straw bosses on horseback riding over prostrate peons; riderless horses trampling piles of dead warriors; a faceless, grinning mob (all teeth) parading with red banners. These slashes of red are the only color used in the lunettes, savage strokes of black serving the artist's purpose well enough in the cartoonlike style he chose to use here. Lin Baldwin likened them to William Steig's war drawings, and the comparison was apt. Could Steig have seen them? Orozco never lacks a monumental sense and a great feeling for movement, but these murals *are* caricatures, object lessons in social injustice. Where he has used color, in the damaged end panels, the symbolism seems strained.

I noticed, walking out, the set of handsome bronze doors with busts of the heroes of the American republics. Juárez for Mexico, of course; Martí for Cuba; Pétion for Haiti . . . and

for the U. S.? Thomas A. Edison! But, naturally, I could hear the Mexican say: we give you ideals and liberty; you give us the Incandescent Bulb!

* * *

From Jiquilpan we drove along the south shore of Lake Chapala, a large body of fresh water that has become the victim of Mexico City's drought and Guadalajara's boom. The waters have been receding for years. The lake presents a forlorn picture, with its masses of water plants extending hundreds of yards into the water. Cows were browsing in this clogged vegetation of the shallows, sometimes up to their necks, and the desperate fishermen were busy with poles trying to keep channels open from their once-lakeside homes to clear water.

Jacotepec lies at the western extremity of the lake, and there, recalling vividly D. H. Lawrence's descriptions of it in *The Plumed Serpent,* we turned and drove east along the northern shore to Chapala. The home of Lawrence's friend Witter Bynner, whom I knew slightly, was closed; he wasn't expected back, a neighbor told us, until Easter. Lawrence's house, a few blocks closer to lake shore, was rented to some Americans. They were asleep, but the *criada,* as Lawrence would have called her, led us into the garden, in the center of which a swimming pool now lies, flanked by neoclassic sculpture. One wall of the garden is covered by a very large "art moderne" mural, derisively defaced by children's initials, even to the top of the wall; we were unable to relate its angular iconography to anything Lawrencian. But facing it on the white brick wall of the house were two legends set in tile. The first, a quotation from Robert Louis Stevenson (whose favorite novelist, I recalled, was Dumas), began: "That man is a success who has lived well, laughed often, and loved much . . ." Poor Lawrence, he loved all right. The second stated simply: "In this house, in the year 1923, D. H. Lawrence wrote *The Plumed Serpent.*"

Nineteen twenty-three! The very year Orozco was beginning to paint the Preparatory School . . . Pessimists both, haters of gods invented by men, believers in the blood, but how different in the symbols they chose to project their dark visions! Orozco through the misery of the masses, betrayed in justifiable

uprisings . . . Lawrence through the sophisticated European's frustrated search for lost primitive values . . . Standing in their hallowed footsteps, as I had today, I saluted them in spirit for their matchless esthetic daring, their properly mad quest for the truth, and wished their tragic souls more repose than they had ever hoped for.

At Ajíjic, the fishing village four miles west of Chapala, America's perpetual-summer seekers have been lured by the hundreds with promises of homes for $50 a month, servants for $15, and filet mignon at 35¢ a pound. We saw them reading their dog-eared copies of *The Reader's Digest* in the gardens of the best houses, sipping rum-and-cokes to the subdued strains of rock-and-roll. Meanwhile, the remnant of the fishing population was having a rodeo in a stockaded corral to the raucous tooting of a brass band. We took our luck with the latter and watched from the top rail the roping and bareback riding (and, of course, caping) of a half dozen bony but spirited bulls. The sun's magical afterglow silhouetted the wine-dark mountains of the Pacific slope as we drove across the flat Jaliscan plain into Guadalajara.

March 6, Guadalajara

The first thing you notice in Mexico's second city—even before the majestic buildings and clean broad avenues—is the abundance of beautiful women. I'm not the first to have noticed it:

Para serapes Saltillo;
Chihuahua para soldados;
Para mujeres Jalisco;
Para amor, toditos lados . . .

Ignacio Díaz-Morales, Guadalajara's outstanding architect and a close friend of Orozco's, told me the rhyme when we called on him this morning. "There is also a legend," he said, "that some of the angels came here. When they found out how much better the climate was than in Paradise, they stayed. That accounts for *some* of the women you saw!"

Díaz-Morales is another of those great Mexican gentlemen (all classes produce them) whose genius and geniality strain one's vocabulary for superlatives. On our return from the coast

he is going to take us on a personally conducted tour of the city, divided between the Orozcos and some of the new housing and city-planning projects he has sired.

I was carrying three letters of introduction, and during the afternoon and evening used two of them.

The first was addressed to the editor of one of Guadalajara's newspapers. He turned out to be an almost fanatical apostle of the American way of life. He said that, by way of the recently opened direct route down the Pacific coast from California, the United States was contributing a lion's share to Guadalajara's present boom. The periodic migrations of Mexican labor to the United States he considers the greatest single factor in introducing much-needed seeds of democratic behavior here. "You have voting machines which give you an exact tabulation of the vote," he remarked, grinning, "but we're way ahead of that: we know the exact result a year before the voting ever takes place! Thanks to American influence, though, the picture is steadily improving. Meanwhile, we prosper. Do you know that we now even export *shoes* to the U. S.? We're distant enough from the capital to have escaped ruinous taxation and excessive political meddling —so far."

His optimism was rudely shattered by my second contact, an American businessman and his wife, with whom we spent the evening. This man has lived in Guadalajara many years, and his bitterness is exceeded only by that of his wife. In his view, Guadalajara, "like the rest of Mexico," is heading for another revolution. The prosperity so apparent in the center of town only masks the terrible poverty of the slum area around the Hospicio, where as many as thirty people often live in a single two-room shack. There are three economies in Mexico, he says. The northern fringe of states "operates wholly within the American economy." The State of Mexico and the Federal District, together with Morelos and Guerrero (i.e., Cuernavaca and Acapulco) and Veracruz, "monopolize the federal budget." The rest of Mexico, including Guadalajara, "gets almost nothing."

As for the seasonal migrants (*pochos*, he calls them), "they are the *worst* influence in this country. If they like the U. S., they stay there; if they dislike it, they return and make propa-

ganda against us. In any case, only the very worst side of the U. S.—and our border states are the worst—ever rubs off on a Mexican. And this 'boom,' as your friend the editor poetically calls it—what boom? Exporting shoes to the U. S.?" He snorted. "Do you know that every good pair of shoes in this country is made of leather that has to be sent to the U. S. to be tanned? Why, they don't make *anything* in Mexico properly."

"I bought a dress last week," his wife reminded him. "I was assured that it was washable, washed it once, and all the colors ran. It's ruined."

"And take their way of doing business," her husband continued. "Everything I buy here, I buy at a discount—five, ten, or even twenty per cent, because I know the right people. Even a doctor's fee is $20 for me, when a poor Indian whose yearly income is probably $50 has to pay $25. This morning, for example, I parlayed a dice-sized cube of imported Roquefort cheese from 5 *pesos* to 4. How can business be systematized in a country without any standards of value?"

We asked him if he saw any hope of better things.

"Only a liberal dictator," he answered, "—which may be a contradiction in terms—would do the thing Mexico needs most."

"Which is—?"

"Move the bulk of the population out of the seventy per cent of the country that's desert into the fertile, unpopulated *tierra caliente* to the south and east. But Mexico is totally lacking in the pioneer spirit. The rich prefer to stay where they are, picking the fat real-estate plums of Acapulco, for instance, instead of building roads to places like Puerto Vallarta here in Jalisco—which has beaches far surpassing Acapulco's—and thus benefiting the country as a whole.

"And why?" he went on, rhetorically answering his own question: "Because this is the most contradictory, ornery people on the face of this globe! Mexico, I swear to you, is a nation of adolescents! The average Mexican is polite, gentle, and cruel. You have to know pre-Columbian Mexico, and especially Spain —which the Mexican pretends to despise but actually worships (not excluding its aristocratic skin color)—to understand Mexico. Spain, with its oriental culture—heritage of the Moors and Jews, perhaps—established the insidious pattern of family

life in Mexico. The mother smothers her child with love until it is three or four. (I've seen a baby clothed in satin peeping out from under a tattered, louse-infested *rebozo*.) Then she passes it over to the absolute domination of the father, who stifles every vestige of rebelliousness, self-sufficiency, and initiative until the child marries and moves away—when it's too late."

"I knew a Mexican in his late twenties," his wife chimed in, "whose father refused to let him smoke as a child. Even now he won't smoke in his father's presence though the room is filled with people smoking. Or take the Mexican wife. Does the husband ever take her out with him? Does he make her a party to any part of his life? Except cooking and bringing up *his* children?"

"Some of my closest Mexican friends no longer come to see me," her husband reminded her, "because you insisted on inviting their wives to dinner. They can't comprehend it! But to a party to which they alone were invited, they'll think nothing of bringing a girl friend or several other uninvited guests—or just not show up at all after accepting your invitation with profuse thanks."

"And do they ever invite *us* to *their* homes," said his wife, "no matter how many times we have them here?"

The American husband sighed and slumped back in his chair, replenishing our glasses of Mexican-bargain whiskey.

"We sound as if we don't like the Mexicans," he said apologetically. "We really love them, though I'll confess that if we could *afford* to live in the States—to live, that is, the way we do here, with the servants, the wonderful climate, the devalued *peso*, and all—we'd move back tomorrow."

March 7, San Blas

Left Guadalajara at 8:30 and had lunch in Tepic, the capital of Nayarít province, about 1:00. The road descends gradually through squandered mountains, wearing their cactus like crowns of thorns. We skirted the forbidding *barranca* of the Santiago, which stretches along the Pacific for hundreds of miles. Behind it, volcanic mountains lend a certain grandeur to the desolation. At one point we crossed a black lava bed. Obsidian boulders with polished facets gleamed in the sun. Tepic, nestling against an

extinct volcano, is in *tierra caliente*, but though the broad valley in which it lies has plantations of sugar, papaya, and bananas, it takes on some of the grimness of the surrounding hills. I wondered whether this harshness might offer a clue to the grotesque pre-Columbian burial statuary for which Nayarít is famous. At any rate, these red-clay Tarascan warriors, with their stumpy legs, hooked noses, and bulging eyes, have none of the ingratiating curves of Colima statuary to the south; nor is their brutality of mien relieved by any of the decorative exuberance of the Zapotecs.

On the road, at a place called Ixtlán, we stopped in front of a junk shop, the façade of which was completely covered with bizarre objects. I was intrigued by a porcelain *toro* and a papier-mâché gypsy. The proprietor quoted me a price of twelve *pesos* each, but when I asked him to get them down he said it wouldn't be possible.

"Haven't you a ladder?" I asked.

"I have two, but they're both too short."

"Why not tie them together?"

"It could be done, but it would be dangerous. I wouldn't want to go up."

I told him I'd go up, and after he'd fastened the ladders with bits of string, I did go up, though suspecting by this time that he preferred not to disturb the unusual décor of his façade.

In Tepic I took snapshots of an auctioneer tossing lace panties to a crowd to keep their attention, and then called on a local small-plane pilot named Muñoz who ferries supplies to the Huichol and Cora Indians in their remote mountain villages. The Huicholes are more numerous than the Lacandóns and live more like nomads, one family miles from another, migrating constantly; but they are like them in having kept their original religion intact. Their art, expressed in totemic designs on clothing, is pure abstraction.

I had seen photographs of this workmanship but couldn't find any of it in the shops of Guadalajara. I asked a girl in one of them why, and she told me that one day a Huichol had wandered in and held out his hat, begging her to drop a few *centavos* in it. He was wearing a magnificently embroidered scarf and she suggested that he sell it to her. "I'll give you 200 *pesos* for

it," she said. He turned his back on her, spat, and walked out.

The colors with which the Huicholes work are confined to green (fertility), red (blood, the sun), black (night, death), and burnt umber (the cultivated fields). Their religious ceremonies resemble Haitian *vaudou* in that states of possession are of primary importance, though the Huicholes bring these on not by communal rhythmic rites but by drinking or chewing a distillation of the *peyote* weed. Oddly enough, *peyote* does not grow in Nayarít, so the Indians make annual pilgrimages in December to the country north of San Luis Potosí, where this cactus flourishes. As in the drug *mescalin,* which is derived from *peyote,* consumption of it brings on hallucinations through its affect on the optic nerve.

The Huicholes believe that the *peyote* plants were deer at one time, and that before this the deer were corn. So both the weed and the deer (which they hunt as part of the ritual) help the crops. On the pilgrimage, which follows the harvest, important matters are settled by interpretation of dreams. Arriving in San Luis Potosí, the pilgrims' food supply is exhausted, and they live on the *peyote.* Tired and thin on their return, they must still hunt deer. Then begin the ceremonies, the feasting and drinking, and the end of sexual abstinence. The bud, when put in a drink, is said to make the drinker mad for love, *empeyotado,* and is said to sing when being plucked. The Huicholes, among the most musical of Mexican tribes, make their own violins, guitars, and ceremonial drums. Before settling down to music or revelry, however, the pilgrims take time out to beat the wives suspected of being unfaithful during the months-long pilgrimage; but this is said to be only a "ceremonial" beating.

No chance of flying into the Huichol country; Muñoz was not to be found. But his wife told us as much about the tribe as any outsider could and directed us to a *tienda* near the Cathedral, where we were able to see and buy some of their rare handiwork.

* * *

Arriving here at the Pacific port of San Blas about 4:00, we went for a swim on the black-sand beach, deserted save for a

huge "totem" of driftwood which some imaginative beachcomber had erected between the waves and the coconut groves.

In the hotel, mimeographed copies of Longfellow's last poem, "The Bells of San Blas," were available at the desk; and in the dining room a California oldster was reading it, or rather intoning it, to his grandchildren, who wandered about among the tables paying no attention to him whatever. He pronounced the name of the town "Sand Blast" and did full justice to its synthetic banalities:

> But to me, a dreamer of dreams,
> To whom what is and what seems
> Are often one and the same,
> The bells of San Blas to me
> Have a strange wild melody
> And are something more than a name.

What they were, it seems, was a sad reminder that the power of the priests over Spanish Mexico—

> The vanished days of yore
> When the world with faith was filled

—was vanishing. Longfellow, characteristically, never visited Mexico, basing his poem on an article he had read in *Harper's* in 1822.

His California admirer was in great spirits during dinner. He had come to Mexico in his trailer by way of Texas, his wife's home state. He was making periodic visits to new-found friends at adjoining tables, leaving each to return to his own with a "punch line" followed by hearty laughter—also his own. I couldn't avoid overhearing snatches. "So X, after he struck oil, set up *two* insurance outfits, which made him more millions, and then he bought a 37,000-acre ranch in Mexico. The last I heard, he was buying whole *communities* in California, tearing down old houses, building new ones, and renting them to the former tenants at *twice* what they'd paid before. . . . San Antonio is *completely* in the hands of six Jewish businessmen. I hate to think what's going to happen when the people realize what a ride they're being taken for. . . . How did Henry J. Kaiser

make his money? His wife was Secretary Ickes' sister. . . . So this boyhood friend of my wife's, who's a prominent doctor now, gave a dinner for us in San Antonio and—I'm not exaggerating—there were *twenty* at the table. My wife and him sat at one end being pretty chummy. So I got pretty chummy with *his* wife and felt the place on her neck where her collarbone had been took out. But the thing that's sort of put a cloud over our trip down here is that we heard later that the very day we left San Antonio that good doctor dropped dead of a heart attack. Of course I said to my wife we all have to die sometime, but isn't things like that just like life?"

March 8

San Blas, even with Longfellow's help, will never be a popular resort. The incoming waves are filled with tiny black particles, and the thin curtain of water that finally sweeps up the shingle is dark brown, like mud. There is also the constant wind, and when it subsides, the biting gnats. The beach is strewn with wizened coconut rind, broken shell, and an occasional dead sea bird.

A family of middle-class Mexicans is busy this morning over a huge sand sculpture. The sixteen-year-old boy most actively; two younger children when the spirit moves them; the mother, pacing back and forth, making occasional comments, in an advisory capacity: she has done her creative work. When she marshals them into the water, I get up and look at the figure. It has a head that is enormous, dwarfing the body—grotesque, with bulging eyes and lips, and eyebrows like lintels—precisely like a pre-Columbian Nayarít warrior!

* * *

Lin, who captained the Yale cross-country team, is running from far up the beach in my direction. His expression is serious, as a Yale athlete's should be, and when he eases to a walk he snaps his fingers jauntily. Though it is sometimes hard to tell whether Lin is reacting to life at all, since he seldom talks, rarely asks questions, and confines his few observations to gently sardonic remarks delivered from the side of his mouth about himself or me, he is a good person to travel with—unde-

manding, self-reliant, frequently witty. He had an acute case of dysentery last night but didn't damn the Mexicans.

* * *

Another Mexican family, very poor, have seated themselves further up the beach and are preparing to bathe. The man, with a square head, expressionless eyes, and long brown moustaches, looks like one of Zapata's guerrillas in the photographs of 1917. His wife, flat-chested and prematurely aged, is clothed in a tattered kimono. Her mother has long, straggly, gray-white hair and is clad in a kimono even dirtier and more torn than the younger woman's. Both look like Macbeth's witches. . . . They are taking the old woman into the ocean now, seating her in about a foot of water, and dabbing water gently on her back while she smiles gratefully but a little fearfully and sprinkles a few drops on her own head with one hand. The fourth member of the family, a girl of perhaps ten, refuses to go near the water. Wrapping an old lavender *rebozo* around her like a skirt, she plays grown-up without an audience.

* * *

On a nondescript veranda where Pepsi-Cola and cracked coconuts are competing for the trade, one white-haired, retired businessman from California is addressing another. "General Motors is paying $2.48 an hour to common labor. With 248,000 on the payroll that amounts to at least $3,000,000. They're the kind that don't want to get out of the shallows and shift for themselves. Automatons, I call 'em."

* * *

At the water's edge, a beautiful young Mexican girl is lying on her stomach, the wind bellying her loose bathing suit below the waist into an additionally enticing curve.

* * *

Far out in the motionless ocean a high, massive island with a tiny lighthouse atop is silhouetted against the steel-blue sky like a spiked helmet. Man's small, defiant response to the indifferent flatness.

18 GUADALAJARA: OROZCO'S CITY

The Hidalgo Cycle—First Look at the Hospicio —The University Theater—Inside the Dome with Díaz-Morales—Ancient Churches and Modern Homes —Conflicting Views of Cárdenas—Jorge Matute Draws a Map—Tribute to the Living Arts

March 10, Guadalajara

I had thought, judging the other Orozco murals by photographs, that the ones in the Preparatory School were the best. I should have known better. If there was any doubt in my mind that Orozco was *the* great artist of our age, it has vanished in Guadalajara. I had a reservation about the Preparatory School. There could be a question whether that degree of dependence on classical modes, so little deviation (except in subject matter) from the fifteenth-century master muralists, entitled Orozco to rank with the best of them. Now that doubt is resolved. For here Orozco has *invented form* to match his content, creating as he does so entirely new color harmonies, and on a scale and with a soaring imagination comparable to Tintoretto or Greco or Goya at their best. And perhaps my first reflection after the physical shock of coming into sight of the works themselves was that Orozco was as fortunate as Tintoretto and Greco had been (and more fortunate than Goya) in having had an accepted iconography (or "story line") from which to work. Greco's and Tintoretto's "story line" was the Christian mythos, Orozco's was the Mexican Revolution (1810-1920). Like them, he didn't exactly "accept" his mythos, rebelling against its inconsistencies and excesses and inner corruptions as they did, yet it remained for him, as Christianity did for them, the supreme reality through

which his own terrifying inner struggle could be projected and dramatized.

Picasso is the only other modern painter whose powers of invention are as awe-inspiring, yet, beside the mighty Hidalgo cycle in the stairwell of the Palacio de Gobierno, such a cerebral fantasy as the "Guernica" seems almost like a game with cut-outs. The subject is the same—the horror and pity of war—but, whereas Picasso felt compelled to invent visual symbols related to little in the common heritage, Orozco was able to take a number of perfectly familiar historical events (familiar to the Mexicans, that is) and on that "story line" magnify the human material into symbolic images. These images, far from losing their reality in the process of communication, become more personal as they become heroic.

As one ascends the stairs, one's eyes are carried up and back to the gigantic effigy of the revolutionary priest, brandishing his torch directly overhead. From its flame, the color symphony of the surrounding areas takes shape. Below the white heat enveloping the prophet's head (flying splinters of burnt wood give the head a palpable dimension), are the swirling bodies of the masses that stormed the Alhóndiga. "Pípila" bearing his gravestone. A towering central figure with arms outstretched, throat pierced by a blade. A smaller figure, a child, draped over a cross. Dozens of others, less particularized, are perfectly related to the whole; and below them lie the bodies of the dead and dying. To offset the curves of their anguish, stacks of bayonets in one corner bristle like cacti. The over-all color key of red-brown-gray-black is very subtly modulated here and there with a touch of pale blue picking out a mutilated head, or viridian green a twisted foot.

And then the side walls! Gradually, as one ascends, they come into focus, perhaps forty feet high and wide. The one on the left is a prodigious still life (if you can call writhing death "still") dominated by a blocky cross and red bishops' miters against the white-hot sky; on the right is hell itself, snarled and smoking. A close look reveals that there is nothing literary about the demons in this Inferno. The bearers of swastika, fasces, hammer-and-sickle, and dollar stomp over the smashed emblems of culture. And at the bottom of this maelstrom of withering

violence, Karl Marx, a pompous bearded head set upon a dwarfed body, is making a speech.

* * *

After lunch we drove to the Hospicio, another major revelation. The dome, which surmounts the towering cruciform church of the orphanage, had recently threatened to cave in and was enveloped in scaffolding. Since the architect in charge of its repair, our friend Díaz-Morales, had already promised to take us up into it tomorrow, and because we wanted to see the Orozcos at the University before they closed for the day, we took a very quick look at Orozco's masterpiece. Díaz-Morales had already told us a story about the image of Philip II of Spain on one of the overhead vaults. It seems that Orozco had already painted in that panel a centaur and that our friend had chided him, suggesting that Philip, the very quintessence of the Spanish character, more rightly belonged there. Orozco had grumbled that he was only painting Spain-in-Mexico. But several months later, when leaving for the capital, he had sent a message to the architect informing him that a present awaited him at the Hospicio. Díaz-Morales had found Philip, larger than life; so, when he encountered the artist the next time he had asked jokingly how he was expected to take his present home with him. "That's your problem," Orozco had growled, "but if you want it, take it; it's yours."

I was dumfounded by the sheer magnitude and extraordinary harmony of the chapel as a whole; in these respects it seems quite comparable to Michelangelo's Sistine. But the absence of a single dominating space and the complexity of so many small ones gives the murals a special character, like so many jewels in a crown. I was also dazzled by elements new to my knowledge of Orozco. Here is no cluttered, overpowering mass of figures; the colors are cool; each panel, precise and lyrical, is treated differently and with surprising fantasy. I even thought I detected a happy influence of de Chirico in a scene depicting the evolution of the coat of arms of Guadalajara—an armored cavalier separated by a column from a menacing apparition without a face. Over the crossing the images in the oblong, triangular, and curved areas begin to build up to the climactic

dome (now covered from below) which we will see tomorrow. The smallest of these areas are filled most appropriately with interlocking abstract shapes, geometrical but three dimensional, silver against sky blue, gun metal over peach, depicting the arts and crafts. One, a "self-portrait," contains the artist's hand.

* * *

We drove across town to the University, but since it was now midafternoon the premises were deserted, and the caretaker with the keys to the *paraninfo* was on siesta. Searching for him, we wandered through a number of the studies and lecture rooms, in not one of which was a single chair, desk, or book to be found. I wondered whether the educational facilities here, as in the University at Mexico City, have as yet failed to catch up with the grandiose façade. (Later in the day, I met an American professor of English who told me that the teaching profession, as we know it, simply doesn't exist in Mexico. "There are colleges of medicine," he said, "presided over fitfully by full-time practicing doctors, colleges of law presided over by lawyers, architecture by architects, and so on; but a department of philosophy and letters is only now in the process of being organized. I've been here a month myself and have yet to face a single class. The University is a political football, if you want my frank opinion. Faculty appointments are in the hands of the PRI [the monolithic party that runs the country], and though the students sometimes strike in protest over the failure of professors to show up in classes, they too are organized in their electoral units by the PRI and regard a college career mainly as a stepping stone to political influence in their future professions.")

If I had not already seen the "Hidalgo" frescoes—*not* the later version in the Chamber of Deputies, which is diffuse and surprisingly mild—the Orozcos in the University Theater would have been enough to persuade me of the artist's stature as an expressionist. The big wall at the back of the stage is another tragic hymn to man's capacity to suffer and endure. It could have been inspired by the photographs of the concentration camps that shocked the world in 1945, though I believe it was painted earlier. With upraised arms, the victims drive their

cowering oppressors across a chasm of flame into the "paradise" they have prepared for humanity. The oppressors, as they flee, point to legal precedent in law books spattered by blood. On one of the side walls is a haunting image of a bony father and son[1] standing over the body of a child. On the other side, facing this scene, is a brutalized Mexican soldier backing up two bloated, bird-brained revolutionists, their hands on their pistol holsters, their feet on a stack of rifles and law books. These three in their dehumanized grossness are as frightening as any figures Orozco ever painted, and if he had painted nothing else they would establish his right to rank among the world's great cartoonists.

In the shallow dome, high-keyed colors, distortion, and swirling movements contrast most effectively with the somber hues of the stage panels. Here the artist is paying his respects to science—admiringly, most commentators say, but to my mind with tongue in cheek. A five-faced head, a trepanned (empty) skull, entrails receiving shock treatment—these give no very reassuring vision of the miracles the professors have in store for those who put their trust in physical therapy!

March 11

Ignacio Díaz-Morales is one answer to the anti-Mexican diatribe of our friend the American businessman last week. Among other things, this architect is the creator of Guadalajara's magnificent Plaza de la Liberación. The Cathedral and palaces surrounding this focal point of the city were of course already there, but it was Díaz-Morales who swept away the clutter between them, planting the trees and designing the fountains. The result is one of the world's fine squares. As in the noble concourse of New York's Grand Central Terminal, one never feels lost in it, or overpowered, or friendless.

When I called at Díaz-Morales' office the first time, with no letter of introduction, I was made to feel at home at once. And today, when the demands of his busy schedule required that his promised tour of the city be split up into three appointments, he

[1] I've been told since that these are portraits of two well-known American financiers whose ultimate humiliation to the level of the destitute, Orozco wished to emphasize.

arrived at our hotel for each one of them precisely *on time.*

Because he is a good Catholic, and his archbishop asked him to, Díaz-Morales is presently completing the construction of a Gothic church, though as a good architect he is quite unsympathetic to such eclecticism. Because he was Orozco's friend and loved Orozco's work, he has also been organizing and superintending the reconstruction of the Hospicio dome for well on seven years, wheedling with great difficulty funds from the government for labor and supplies, importing experts from Austria and Italy to remove the fungus growth from the exposed frescoes—with no remuneration for himself.

We climbed ladders and catwalks on the exterior of the church, arriving finally within the dome itself. He showed us the iron hoops which had banded its exterior for a hundred years or more. The bolts had rusted away, in consequence of which the hoops had burst and the stone and plaster within had begun to crumble.

Aided by floodlights which Díaz-Morales had installed on a circular platform under the lantern, we studied the astonishing figures of "Wind," "Fire," and "Water" from eye level, as few will ever be privileged to. The artist himself, Díaz-Morales pointed out, had been provided with a primitive scaffolding that obscured everything except the area immediately in front of his brush. Orozco had never seen the work as a whole except from the rotunda thirty-two and a half meters below—and then only when the work was completed. Even in the Sistine Chapel, working conditions could not have been so difficult; and indeed the two stupendous images of "Wind" and "Water" with outstretched fingers not quite touching can only be compared with Michelangelo's somewhat similarly posed "Creation" group. Nor does Orozco suffer by the comparison. The head of "Wind," its features loosely composed to suggest a blowing-apart of the facial structure, could perhaps only have been carried off by the Florentine artist—if he had been familiar with El Greco. There could be a reference in this figure by Orozco to Quetzalcoatl, the Creator among the Indian gods, who was also a symbol of the wind until the day Tezcatlipoca, god of the night, assumed the form of a tiger and pulled him down to earth, causing a hurricane which destroyed the first race of men.

I lay down on the platform and from that position understood for the first time the foreshortening of the figure of "Fire" in the dome's center. The head, one arm, one leg, and a portion of the body are enveloped in flame, accounting for the distortion in photographs, which appear to limit the figure to a single arm and leg. Probably the eye adjusts to the artist's intention even more accurately when the composition is seen, as it was intended to be, from far below.

The architect told us that Orozco was satisfied that he would never surpass this achievement and had hoped to be buried some day in the rotunda with the dome above his fitting monument. "He did not paint here continuously," Díaz-Morales said, "but used to say to me, 'When I am the good Orozco, I come here to paint; when I am the bad Orozco I paint in the University or the Palacio de Gobierno.' " Which was not to imply that Orozco considered the latter masterpieces bad painting but that the Hospicio dome was "purer," as he himself had once said to another friend, than any of his other works with their political implications. "He was genuinely impressed by this orphanage and with the humanity of its founder, Archbishop Cabañas," Díaz-Morales added. A scene of the Archbishop dispensing alms, in one of the arched panels below, is treated with moving tenderness.

For all the five years' work in the three buildings, Orozco received no more than 400 *pesos* ($32) a month. This salary could hardly have defrayed the cost of his materials and the wages of the one or two assistants who prepared the surfaces of the walls to be worked on. "He was contented," the architect said, "because he wanted to paint for the people, and in fact spoke often to me about the possibility of covering the *exterior* walls of the Hospicio with a series of murals at his own expense. The Governor of Jalisco allowed the 400-*peso* stipend reluctantly, and only because he had been led to believe that Orozco was a political radical who might glorify his regime—which of course the artist never did."

I asked Díaz-Morales why Orozco in one of the vaults had painted a magnificent figure of Cortés with bolts in his elbows and knees. "Because," he replied, "Orozco thought that was the way the Indians had seen Cortés, as a kind of superhuman robot.

When I asked him why the angel who is hovering over the Conqueror also has bolts, in her breasts, Orozco laughed and said: 'I guess because angels never have really been seen, and I saw no reason why, if some paint them with feathered wings, I shouldn't imagine them my way.' "

Lin Baldwin and I had visited Orozco's studio, which is open to the public and which houses a mediocre collection of the artist's prints and late easel pictures, on our way back from the University yesterday. I asked Díaz-Morales how Orozco got the money to put up such a substantial modern building.

"There's a story about the original studio that preceded this reconstructed one," he replied. "Orozco noticed the lot one day and mentioned to an architect who was with him that he'd like to build on it some day. 'Fine,' said the architect, 'I'll design it for you for nothing.' A construction man, when he heard this, offered to donate bricks and cement. Orozco only had to pay for labor, and the building progressed whenever he sold a print or painted a portrait. When it was finished, just before Orozco died, the *maestro* encountered the owner of the land one day. 'How did you manage to buy the land?' he asked the artist with a smile. He hadn't bought it at all, Orozco confessed; the necessity had never occurred to him. But the landlord told him not to worry about it; he could pay for it if and when he had the money."

* * *

At 11:00 A.M. Díaz-Morales dropped us at our hotel, returning for us at 1:00. We drove, next, to the fine old churches, San Felipe and Santa Mónica. I admired particularly a figure of St. Christopher on an exterior niche of the latter, attenuated very much in the manner of Lehmbruch. There is Indian influence in much of this Colonial sculpture, and the best of it, like the St. Christopher, has yet to be equaled by any contemporary Mexican.

We visited some typical houses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with their arcaded patios on which all the family living quarters open. The home that Díaz-Morales is building for himself is influenced by these houses only in its emphasis on intimacy and its use of massive walls—a respect in which this architect's work resembles that of his fellow Tapatian,

Luis Barragán, whom he characterized as "one of the two best architects in Mexico, José Villagrán García being the other." Remembering O'Gorman's admiration for Frank Lloyd Wright, I asked Díaz-Morales whether he shared it. He did not. "Wright neglects—as Louis Sullivan, Wright's master, never did—the first and most important of the three requirements of good architecture: respect for the dignity of the human occupant. Wright thinks only of glorifying Wright."

* * *

On our third excursion, starting at 5:30, we drove to some of the low-cost housing projects Díaz-Morales helped to initiate and plan. This was some seven years before he founded the University's School of Architecture, which now takes a good deal of his time. Altogether, these projects accommodate perhaps 300 families, or 1,500 individuals, out of an estimated 200,000 Tapatians who need to be moved out of slums. We visited one of these slums on the way, a long dark alley lined with airless dens out of which dozens of half-naked children poured to stare at us and beg for money. We asked one mother how much rent she was paying for her single room, and she replied: "Sixty *pesos* a month."

Díaz-Morales' single-family units, in contrast, each contain a small patio, filled with plants, flowers, and birds, and though the cost is slightly more (80 *pesos*) they are financed in such a way as to give the tenant outright ownership in ten years. It was obvious that the owners of these tiny homes were proud of them: you could see it in their neatness, in the way they were decorated, and in the obvious delight the tenants took in showing them off to us.

"And what of those who have no such homes?" I asked our friend. "Is the government making any move to appropriate more than the 3,000,000 *pesos* this cost?"

"On the contrary," he said, shaking his head sadly, "the governments of Mexico, state and national, despite the notable fact that our present President will probably be the first in history to leave office as poor as when he came, is still in the hands of thieves. The lesser corruptionists remain."

"Is Cárdenas doing anything to counteract this tendency?" I asked.

"Cárdenas," he answered, "had it in his power to solve Mexico's problems while he was President, but instead of giving the expropriated lands outright to the peasants, he left a measure of control in the hands of the state banks and so, ultimately, in the hands of the PRI. Our opposition party, the PAN, of which I am an original member and of which my father-in-law is a leader, can make little headway against the party in power, though it believes firmly in democratic processes."

"And Cárdenas today—what is he doing?"

"Wonders for his own state, Michoacán, in which he has enormous holdings; but at the expense of states like Jalisco which surround it. As a Communist—"

"Communist?"

"Would Cárdenas have accepted the Stalin Peace Prize were he not one?"

"Then what is the social solution of these problems? Birth control?"

"Certainly not. Birth control is against nature. The Mexican loves his family, and the larger the better. There is enough for everyone in Mexico. The solution must be arrived at gradually and peacefully, through education and the development in all of us of a sense of charitable responsibility."

March 12

"The real Mexican," says D. H. Lawrence, "doesn't *like* keeping money. His deep instinct is to spend it at once so that he needn't have it. He doesn't really want to keep anything, not even his wife and children. Nothing that he has to be responsible for. Strip, strip, strip away the past and the future, leaving the naked moment of the present disentangled. Strip away memory, strip away forethought and care; leave the moment stark and sharp and without consciousness, like the obsidian knife."

I was thinking of this passage the morning in Guadalajara the shop girl told me about the Huichol who spat and walked out on her offer of money for his scarf; and I thought of it again today, on the so-called higher level of society, when I read in the papers

about Jorge Garrigos, son of one of Cuernavaca's richest families, who is now dead. Yesterday he parked illegally among the taxis at his favorite nightclub. When a policeman came in to request him to move, he slapped the officer's face. When two more policemen came in, he mixed it up with all three and was finally shot.

I happened to be in the office of Jorge Matute, former Mayor of Guadalajara, when I read this item. I asked Matute whether it was true that the average Indian saves no money, lives in the present.

"Of course it's true," he said. "How can he save money when he has no money? And how can he live anywhere but in the present when he has no future? His 'past' was taken away from him 400 years ago. But he does save corn and *frijoles* and such. His wife tries to keep the few cents' profit they may occasionally put by from going into *tequila* and *fiestas*—but that's where it goes eventually anyway. What can you expect, with no education? But he's going to get an education sooner or later. The Indian *appears* to be shiftless and lazy, but that's because of the various diseases—malaria, typhus, and God knows what else—that he's been carrying around with him for centuries."

"What about this Jorge Garrigos?" I said, pointing to my newspaper.

"There are people like that in all wealthy societies," he replied. "If there is a little more violence in them here, that may be because we Mexicans are still close to the Revolution, when it was every man for himself."

"But the fact that all Cuernavaca rallies to his defense," I persisted, "that wires are sent to the President demanding 'action' in this 'outrageous shooting.' And that the 'action' comes in the form of jailing the chief of police and his subordinates who merely tried to enforce the law, regardless of social prestige. That's the part I find shocking."

Matute shrugged his shoulders. "Money counts. Influence counts. Is it not so in your country?"

It was the kind of an *ad hominem* argument with just enough truth behind it to defy a simple response. It was the kind of argument Germans used to give one in the early thirties when one attacked their treatment of the Jews; what about *your*

lynching of Negroes, they'd say. Matute had resorted to it very skillfully earlier in our conversation when I asked him whether Cárdenas' acceptance of the Stalin Peace Prize didn't indicate a certain tolerance, at least, of Soviet Communism.

"Weren't you Americans very friendly with Stalin when it served your purpose? From 1941 to 1945?"

I could hardly deny it.

"Suppose," he continued, "Cárdenas had turned the prize down. Who would have been pleased? No one but you Americans. Would that have served his purpose?"

"His purpose being what?" I asked.

"To lead the Mexican people, and Mexico, gently but firmly along the path to socialism, control of the land, the natural resources, the rivers—whatever else is needed to assure the poor peasant what he has always lacked."

"But how does encouraging Russia—"

"Russia is far away and has never seized any part of Mexico. Cárdenas could have been asserting Mexico's right to an independent policy."

"How powerful is Cárdenas today?"

"Cárdenas gets around a lot—some say too much—but then, as they say, '*Santo que no es visto, no es adorado. . . .*' "

"Is Cárdenas a wealthy man? And is it true, as I've heard, that his present reclamation work is benefiting Michoacán at the expense of Jalisco?"

"Cárdenas is not a wealthy man. His brother Dámaso is a very wealthy man. Cárdenas is a very simple man, a man of few words, a good man. He has done great things for his own state —you have to start in your own backyard, no? But Michoacán hasn't benefited at our expense."

"And Jalisco," I asked, "is it experiencing real prosperity?"

"To understand Jalisco," Matute answered, "you must know our history. Look at this map."

On his engineering board he proceeded to draw a map of the state, showing the rivers and mountains. He is a very young man —or still appears to be—with a long, bronzed face and a shock of curly black hair. He is serious, intelligent, humorless. It was he who moved Guadalajara's telephone building, when the city was expanding rapidly and needed broader avenues, *by hand*

labor across a street, without interfering with services even for a minute.

"You see," he said, pointing to his map, "how isolated we are here? My family has lived in Jalisco for 200 years, my wife's family for 400. In the old days it took three weeks to ride to Mexico City; even more than that in a *diligencia*. Naturally there was little communication between the two cities. Guadalajara remained the capital not of New Spain but of Nueva Galicia. Today every family here has contacts up and down the coast from Colima to California; and every important family has a house in the capital—meaning here. In Don Porfirio Díaz's time, the federal government cut us down to size. We were getting too independent and strong. They made separate states out of Colima and Nayarít. And today there is talk of taking away Jalisco's northern section and dividing it between Nayarít and Zacatecas, the two states that monopolize its trade, since the great *barranca* makes the region almost inaccessible to this city. But our prosperity and our population doubled with the completion of the railroad and paved highways to Nogales and Mexico. We'll continue to expand and prosper—if they'll let us."

* * *

I think the thing that impressed me most in Guadalajara (perhaps in all Mexico) was the pair of larger-than-life-size seated sculptures flanking the gates to the city through which we left. We got out to see who they were. The one on the right was Mariano Azuela, the great social novelist. The one on the left was José Clemente Orozco. Both heroes of culture had been *alive ten years ago*. To Guadalajara, evidently, they were already immortal.

19 UNDER THE VOLCANO

Ambiguous Symbol—The Road to Angágua—The Chinese Face of Michoacán—Our Steering Gear Snaps— Sinarquismo—*The Buried Church of Parangaricutiro—Night Settles Over Angágua—We Settle in Uruapán—A Guitar to Celebrate*

March 13, Morelia

Sometimes one sees something that has the look of a symbol, though it is difficult to say symbolic of what. Leaving Guadalajara, I caught sight of a snow-white heron hanging by its broken neck from telephone wires through which it had tried to fly. Lin and I got out and stared up at it without saying anything. I took a shot with my Argoflex, using a red filter to bring out the contrasting depth of blue in the cloudless sky, and we drove on.

At Jiquilpan we stopped at Cárdenas' house across the street from the Orozco Library. The general was out, touring Colima, Nayarít, and Jalisco with the governors of those states. His major-domo showed us the arcaded patio of red clay, with its nineteenth-century battle paintings in gilded frames, and the room where Lázaro was born when this was a simple house in a tiny village—though it's not a pretentious house now, nor the village quite yet a city. The major-domo advised us to check with the *vocal executivo* of Cárdenas' state irrigation project, known as Tepalcatepec, in the city of Uruapan.

"By the way," I said, "where do we turn off the road between Morelia and Uruapan to see Paricutin?"

"The town nearest the volcano is called Angágua," he said. "You'll have to inquire along the highway for the dirt road that leads to it."

March 14, Uruapán

Angágua was the fateful word, but before we got to the village of that name we had driven through some of the loveliest country I have seen in Mexico, or anywhere. I've never been in China, but I had the feeling continuously that this must be what it is like at its best. The terrain rolls sensuously from the gently truncated pyramids of ex-volcanoes, pagoda-shaped and densely green with conifers, that stud the plain, to much higher mountains with sharp peaks purple in the haze of distance beyond. The plain itself varies in texture from the shimmering pale green of wheat to the rich black or contoured umber of fields newly prepared for planting; and among the fields the wind, stimulated by some uneasy turbulence in the huge saucer of varying altitudes, builds twisters, miniature dust devils, of the soil. These swirl crazily like tops until, miles away, attenuating to great heights, they suddenly, like Aladdin's genii, vanish.

Perhaps the impression of China comes from the stone walls that divide the fields. They average six feet high, with uneven tops, and are built only to the thickness of a single dusty rock; consequently they are full of holes through which the light leaks, giving the appearance at a distance of black lace. Perhaps the impression comes also from the houses of the Tarascan peasants. These are built of unfinished logs, or squared timber with the ends crossing unevenly to protrude at the angles. The walls and high-pitched roofs are shingled black; and the gates in the stone walls are covered with a little peaked "hat" of black shingles too, like the garden shelters of the philosophers in Sung painting. The more substantial houses of adobe have red tile roofs with an overhang of almost three feet, delicately dentiled and sometimes gaily painted.

Perhaps, though, the insistent impression of China comes from the Indians themselves, with their broad-brimmed, flat-crowned *sombreros* and their *serapes* of black wool sparsely "jeweled" in deep reds and blues.

One such peasant, abandoning to a small boy his donkey which was dragging behind it two thirty-foot timbers, asked us for a ride. This was at the point where the road turns off, eight

miles from Uruapan, to Angágua. The man's features were Mongolian. Sitting in the back of our Jeep with a corded cylinder of faggots between his knees, he looked like some Tartar hetman of Ghengis Kahn. When he had reached his destination, short of ours, he asked us to stop and alighted. I asked him if I might take his picture.

"If you like," he grunted with a toothy grin, "but the price is ten *pesos*."

"And what of *our* price for bringing you here?" I countered.

He laughed and shook his head. "You pay the ten *pesos*. You—Americanos."

"We Americanos, true," I said, "but we do not pay ten *pesos* to photograph our *guests!*"

He shrugged good-naturedly but uncooperatively and plodded off with his bundle. When a boy came running up to us and shouted in English: "You want I show you volcano?" I suddenly remembered that only five years ago Parícutin was still erupting and that this whole countryside had been overrun by tourists come to see a show Barnum might have dreamed of.

We continued on along the now-deserted and very bad road. Little by little, sifted gray ashes replaced the dirt. Finally, as we started to cross a great plain of volcanic dust where the crown of the road was a pile of the soft stuff two feet deep, our tires began spinning irresolutely. Lin was driving. Suddenly, to my horror, I saw him head straight for three huge rocks. I shouted, but too late. There was a grinding crunch and we came to a stop, suspended. I glared at him and he made a gesture with his hands as if to say: you could have done it, you know. He was right. We both began to laugh.

I got down in the ash pile and dug my way under the car. No damage that I could detect—but then, this part of a car was about as familiar to both of us as the far side of the moon. We removed the rocks and continued. Presently a sooty little village on a hillside loomed ahead and, some miles to our left, distinguished from the gray-green peaks around it by its sinister nakedness: Paricutin.

Dr. Atl and his book had already made me familiar with the story of this newest of the world's volcanoes: how it had sprouted without warning on the morning of February 20, 1943,

in the cornfield of Dionisio Pulido of Parangaricutiro. Then, to quote Erna Fergusson, "vulcanologists rushed from all over the world"—what a picture!—and the show was on. Tourists, and Mexicans on weekend outings, came by the hundreds to watch the fireworks. Ten years later the volcano was quite dead, and the surrounding villages returned to their normal (though, from now on, blackened) existence.

No trace of tourism was to be seen in the sleepy village of Angágua as we rolled up to it in a cloud of ashes. No trace, that is, until a young man in tattered shirt and blue pants ran along beside the car and shouted: "You see volcano? I spoken English like perfectly six or seven word. I guide man."

We invited him in and he led us a tortuous path through the rocky streets to a point at which the hillside drops off abruptly toward the valley of death. Seeing deep ashes ahead, I suggested we park the car and walk.

"No, no!" said our guide. "Avanti! No peligro!"

We sank to our hubcaps. I gave the wheel a few frantic turns, and whoof! it spun around in my hands!

We got out and looked under the car again. Sure enough, the gear cord that controls the front wheels was dangling; and below, where it was supposed to meet the axle, a small, round piece of fractured metal had dropped into the dust. We asked if there was a mechanic in the village.

"No, señor."

"A car, then?"

"Como no?" There were two, in fact, but unfortunately both turned out to be in Uruapan.

"When will they be back?"

"Mañana, señor."

Then our guide had his first brainwave. He would hitchhike a ride or wait for a bus—"Two pass here almost every day" —and then return with a truck, or a mechanic, or a steering gear, or something. I gave him an advance of ten *pesos*. As we walked to the road, I asked him why almost every adobe house and wall in Angágua had the letters "U.N.S." whitewashed on it. He pointed to one which amplified: "Sinarquismo Es Mi Esperanza."

I recalled now, from my first visit to Mexico, the Union Nacional de Sinarquistas, a militant Catholic political organiza-

tion that was regarded as fascistic—at least back in the thirties. "They're strong here?" I asked.

He looked at me noncommittally, as though to read my mind. "Quien sabe?" Remembering Tehuántepec, I took a chance.

"My friend and I are on our way to see General Cárdenas in Uruapan."

His face lighted up and he pumped our hands enthusiastically. I was sure now that he'd be back, and with any help he could get.

There'd be a long wait, in any case, so Lin and I set out for the volcano, with a friend of our guide to guide us, leaving a six-year-old *muchacho* to guard our stricken station wagon.

We walked for about an hour, mostly downhill, arriving finally at the river of solidified lava that surrounds the unburied roof and spire of the church of San Juan de Parangaricutiro. However more dramatic this may have looked in the decade of Parícutin's fury, it remains a sight never to be forgotten. Perhaps in any age but ours it would have been merely a natural curiosity. But for me it was fraught with symbolic overtones—overtones much more obvious than the stricken heron's. Depending on one's point of view, it could be regarded as a symbol of ecclesiastical impotence or of miraculous survival. I said to Lin half seriously:

"This should be photographed from the air so that the deep chasms between the blocks of lava choking it would be visible, and captioned: 'This time no life was lost. Next time, every life may be.' "

"That sounds like left-wing propaganda," he said with a smile.

"What's left-wing about it?" I asked.

"Haven't you heard that it's Communistic to be worried about the H-Bomb?"

We climbed the frozen river of stone, stepping across the crevices, holding on to the jagged edges for support as we advanced toward the buried church. Reaching it at last, we were still more amazed to see that, in addition to the upper third of the façade and side walls, the top of the apse and the high altar remained unscathed. The white marble of the latter stood out,

quite detached from the nave, like a miniature Greek temple. Isolated, but somehow ennobled by its isolation in this veritable landscape of hell, it shone with a dazzling radiance in the last rays of the setting sun.

As we were leaving, a venerable Indian approached us. He held out a typewritten card with an official seal, enclosed in a cellophane sheath. It said in English: "Give us whatever you wish to keep this road open."

"I wonder," said Lin, as we made our contribution and started to climb the no-road back to Angágua, "I just wonder how they'd ever go about *closing* it."

Back at the car, our *muchacho* was faithfully standing guard. We gave him three *pesos* and a pile of cookies and walked into the center of the village in search of more substantial sustenance. On the way, we passed a street in which two old women, twenty feet apart, with wine-red skirts sweeping the ground and black *rebozos* over waist-length pigtails, were drawing skeins of white wool from pegs attached to the wall. Through an open door to an adjoining yard I saw a family seated on the ground in a circle around a twelve-year-old girl on a stool. Her mother was combing her hair while her sister gently searched for lice. A girl of about the same age passed us with a baby peeping from the folds of her *rebozo*—her own?

There was no restaurant in Angágua, but a motherly Indian woman and her daughter were officiating in a booth. A wood fire burned on the earth floor. We bought slices of watermelon, *bollos* hard and soft, bottles of *Moctezuma Dos Equis*, and soon there was delicious hot coffee. In the deepening shadows of the little square, five or six small boys were laughing and chasing a ball—not boisterously. The proprietress offered Lin, who was rubbing his cold hands, a place by the fire. Her daughter smiled sweetly as she poured the thick coffee into tiny glasses. Every gesture, every expression among these Indians, I realized, was in tune with some profound harmony—timeless, artless, selfless —that has been lost to the rest of us. No doubt there are hidden wells of violence, but that is part of the order of nature too, not a force to be turned off or on deliberately.

It was almost dark now, so we decided to go back to the car while we could still find it. The village, lacking electricity,

was preparing for sleep, but by the light of the little kerosene flares I noticed an old man standing erect by the angle of a building. His *serape*, drawn over his mouth and nose, was of deepest blue. The fretted border was of old rose, and along this border at wide intervals were diamonds of yellow and red. It was the most beautiful *serape* I had ever seen. I walked over to the old Indian and expressed my admiration for it. He was pleased. His wife had woven it for him almost forty years ago, he said.

"They don't make them like that any more," I said.

"Not many," he agreed. "It takes time."

I wanted to add: "—and an unspoiled eye for perfection," but lacked the words.

We curled up in the car and tried to sleep. Lin succeeded. I didn't. I walked out to the edge of the cliff and watched the stars and sliver of moon over the dead volcano. Our guide had told us that coyotes and jaguars roam the pine forests around it, but I heard none. Even the dogs stopped barking after an hour had gone by, and the mournful sound of a donkey's occasional braying was the only punctuation to the endless stillness.

About 11:00 there was the sharp croak of a horn, and then a commotion and a flood of light in the walled alley behind us. Our guide was back, in a Dodge, with two taxi drivers. We piled in gratefully and an hour later were sleeping in the relatively luxurious comfort of the Tourist Mansion Mi Solár in Uruapan.

March 15, Morelia

For a while this morning in Uruapan the prospect of ever getting our car out of Angágua looked as black as Parícutin. The Willys agency didn't have the broken part. To pull the car to Mexico (300 miles) would have cost $160—a prohibitive sum. Finally Carlos Valencia, one of our two rescuers of the night before, suggested taking a mechanic out to see if he could repair the damage temporarily on the spot. While waiting for the mechanic, we visited a lacquer factory. Uruapan lacquer was once, but is no longer, a folk art. The craftsmanship is still excellent but the designs begin to have civilization's cheap, quickly made look. The mechanic arrived and we took off.

In half an hour he had effected enough of a juncture in the

break to permit a very slow return to the shop where welding could be attempted. It worked. We had lunch and walked among the cedars and *fresnos* that border the emerald-green Cupatizio River. A call at Cárdenas' headquarters drew another blank. (I've decided by this time that the composite portrait emerging in these pages will be far more valuable than anything the taciturn hero would conceivably disclose face-to-face.)

About 4:30 everything was ready and we prepared to leave for Morelia. The two round trips to Angágua by taxi cost us 200 *pesos*. For his work, the mechanic had quoted us a price of 70 *pesos*, but after a hurried conference in *very* fast Spanish with Carlos, he raised his ante to 90. We were in no mood to protest. To part on any but the friendliest of terms would have been to tarnish a happy and most unforeseen ending. Lin celebrated the relief we both felt by buying a guitar in Paracho, the village that has been making the finest instruments in Mexico ever since Bishop Quiroga of Michoacán introduced the art here—as he did the weaving of butterfly fishing nets in Patzcuaro.

20 REMEMBER THE ALAMO!

Tragic Poets—Mexico's Lower Depths—Goodbye to the Old Masters—Return to San Miguel—Trials of an American-born Mexican—Beebe in the Sweet-shop—Cárdenas at San Luis Potosí—Vaudeville in Monterrey—Crossing the Border—Deep in the Heart of Texas—Remember the Alamo!

March 16, Mexico City

Poems rarely fit the mood or occasion when they are read, their reference being wider. Last night we had an unexpected visit from Stokes and Kelly, two of our poker-playing friends from Mexico City College who have been away for several months, working on novels. The poem I had been reading, by Jeffers, contains these lines:

> . . . I think of the dull welter of Asia. I think of squalid
> savages along the Congo: the natural
> Condition of man, that makes one say of all beasts: "They
> are not contemptible. Man is contemptible." I see
> The squalor of our own frost-bitten forefathers. I
> will praise the Greeks for having pared down the shame
> of three vices
> Natural to man but to no other animal: cruelty and filth
> and superstition, grained in man's making.

Stokes and Kelly have been living in La Ventosa, a fishing village of some 200 inhabitants a bit up the Pacific Coast from Salina Cruz. As they described it, it's Mexican life at its lowest. The society (degenerated Zapotec Indian) is matriarchal, with the men taking the orders, at least when the women are sober—which isn't often.

There are an average of two *fiestas* a week, lasting sometimes twenty-four hours or more, during which there isn't a sober person in the village except the small children. The church has

only three walls, and no roof; but every house has its shrine with votive candles. There isn't a single toilet, outhouse, or even common dump in the village, everyone going where he feels like it. Drainage is downhill, toward the beach, where the wells for drinking water are located. The people eat fish, when there's a catch—dugout canoes and nets being their only equipment; otherwise they live on badly cured pork. The *mescal* and beer which come in on the weekly truck from Tehuántepec are, of course, always served warm, since there is no refrigeration or electricity in the village. There's also no gas, and little kerosene, so the two writers would go to bed shortly after 5:30 when the sun went down. Policing is in charge of five soldiers, under a sergeant, all of whom smoke marijuana. Fighting with switch blades, machetes, and clubs is frequent and noisy. All the houses, which are thatched, are infested with scorpions.

Just before our friends left, their landlord's son, aged seventeen, was caught sleeping with an "old maid," as they called her, aged twenty-seven. This put the whole village in a state of outraged moral shock, even though, as Stokes remarked, illegitimate children are more common in the village than legitimate ones. The boy was confined to his house for two days while the tipsy elders debated his fate and his friends twitted him from an adjoining yard. The "case" was finally closed when the boy's parents agreed to pay the "disgraced" girl's family 400 *pesos*—a very large sum for such a poor community. If the boy's family hadn't paid it, he'd probably have been forced to marry the "old maid." Once the payment was made, however, not another word was spoken about the affair by anyone. If the girl should have a baby, that would be her problem.

(This, incidentally, is the town described by the American writer Helen Augur as "the most charming spot along the coast . . . where the bathing is good . . . very peaceful . . .")

> . . . O distant future children going down to the foot of the mountain, the new barbarism, the night of time,
> Mourn your own dead if you remember them, but not for civilization, not for our scuttled futilities.
>
> . . . What poet will be born to tell you to hate
> Cruelty and filth? What prophet will warn you

When the witch-doctors begin dancing, or if any man says
"I am a priest," to kill him with spears?

Orozco! How perfectly these lines reflect his despairing search for the truth! The tragic view of life embodied so unforgettably in the Aztec statue of Coatlicue descended unto him, the idol smasher, whose latter-day symbols—Elemental Man, the Tiger, and the Priest-as-Revolutionist—brood over a self-destroying humanity.

I could imagine the savage laughter (to cover compassion and hurt) with which Orozco would have greeted the tale of Kelly and Stokes. I regretted having come too late to hear it and settled for a second look at the Templo de Jesus this morning. The frescoes seemed a little less tangled, after Guadalajara, but still confusing. It's an awesome confusion, though; not arbitrary as in much modern painting. The confusion of a feeling human being trying desperately to make sense out of human misery, to impose some order on the folly of history. As in the Hospicio, the dominant color is blue; and as in the Hospicio, the whole range of post-Cubist techniques, from surrealism to expressionism, are effectively drawn upon. I remembered Siqueiros telling me that Jackson Pollock had once worked with him, but I thought here in the Templo how much more alike Pollock and Orozco are. I wished I had asked Jackson last summer whether he admired Orozco or was ever influenced by him. I felt reasonably certain, looking up at the enmeshed fury of the Apocalypse, the over-all pattern of images in the vault, that Orozco would have painted abstract-expressionist labyrinths had he matured in an environment that valued the "intrasubjective."

I spent the rest of the day saying goodbye to the two surviving members of the Revolutionary Trio. At Chapultepec Palace, where Siqueiros is starting to paint a new mural based on the 1910 Revolution, I found the sketch (as always) exciting. It is on a movable panel. The customary medium, pyroxylin on Fiberglas, was being used, and though the artist hadn't arrived on the scene yet, his nickel-plated spray guns stood ready, attached to electric cords on the scaffold. Phil Stein came in and told me that the central projection this time would be the body of a martyr borne aloft by a crowd. Portraits of the principal revolutionaries will be submerged in the anonymous crowd itself.

To pass the time, we decided to look at one of Siqueiros' finished works nearby. A few blocks from the Park is Sonora Number 9, Siqueiros' residence in the early forties when he was under house arrest following Trotsky's murder—which he was suspected of having masterminded. To keep busy, he had painted a big mural on the wall, stairway, and balcony railing of the duplex living room. For some years afterward this room had served as a dentist's office. I wondered whether the patients found the mural diverting or an additional torment. The building now houses a brothel. If the next occupant happens to be a theologian, the mural will continue to survive. One has to hand it to the Mexicans for that.

In predominating yellows and reds, the mural shows Cuauhtémoc heroically resisting the Conquest (symbolized by a centaur, all projecting hooves) while a small Moctezuma, spreading his arms in a gesture of futile appeasement, stands in the middle. One of Cuauhtémoc's arms is given a double exposure, to indicate trembling. The other, brandishing a spear, has the hero's heart painted on the huge bicep. Siqueiros told Stein that this was "to objectify the subjective." It was the same logic, his assistant added, that had impelled Siqueiros to represent Cuauhtémoc in the Bellas Artes mural fully armored—"to show that if he had had the Conquerors' weapons, he would have triumphed."

* * *

Since I had an appointment with Diego Rivera to sit for a portrait drawing, Stein and I agreed to meet at Chapultepec at 4:00, when Siqueiros would presumably be working on the new mural. I dropped Stein at his apartment off Insurgentes and drove to San Angel.

Diego had wanted to see some of my photographs, and as he leafed through the album, he made characteristic comments. Some are printable.

Of Lombardo Toledano: "He's wearing Ruiz Cortines' bow tie."

Of Alma Reed: "She's holding on to her beauty with both hands."

Of Fred Davis and Carlos Merida: "Good men."

Of Siqueiros: "You can see by his expression that he thinks of himself as very handsome—and very *terrible.*"

Of the peasant family being photographed at Iguala: "A great image."

Of the Lacandóns: "A tribe of priests. They keep it a secret so the Church won't exterminate them."

Of the Maya ruins: "Everything they did is charged with emotion."

As I was leaving, Diego asked me how American artists are making out. I told him that a recent survey in *The New York Times* indicated that out of 250 polled, only eight were making a living. "The galleries are doing well, though."

"That's because the collectors buy only French painting. Why don't your artists organize and fight for their rights? But perhaps that's *our* way!"

He handed me the sketch and asked me how I liked it. Since it was a present, I could hardly be frank. It was neither a likeness nor a good drawing. The old man's eyes are no longer communicating with his hand. I thanked him; we embraced; and he shouted down the stairs after me: "Tell Siqueiros he's intelligent to paint that new mural of his on a movable panel!"

* * *

Returning to Chapultepec Palace, I found Siqueiros pacing back and forth under his mural. He wasn't dressed to paint. He was giving two workmen occasional directions about where to place the horizontal dotted lines which mark the recessions in perspective, but mostly he was talking with elation about the space the morning papers had given to an attack on the government he had delivered yesterday.

"What was I attacking them for?" he replied to my question. "For the worst of their crimes, their suppression of democracy: their iron control through the PRI of the electoral machinery, the newspapers, everything having to do with public opinion. You've noticed the way Mexicans come up to one another in the street and say: 'Psst! You know who's going to be our next President?' 'No. Who?' 'They say Alemán wants . . .' or 'They say Cárdenas wants . . .'"

I asked Siqueiros how much he was being paid for this mural.

"The standard government scale—at least for me and Diego, and I suppose for Tamayo too—is 1,000 *pesos* a square meter, up to 100 square meters. Then the rate falls to 500 *pesos*. This mural is about 80 square meters, so I imagine—though nothing is final yet—that I'll get about 80,000 *pesos*, or $6,400. Obviously this is very little for two or three months' work, if you consider what I could make painting easel pictures in that time, but I like to paint murals."

* * *

By the time Stein arrived, Siqueiros had to leave, so we spent the rest of the afternoon taking in a couple of shows in the center of town.

The first, an exhibition of photographs by Manuel Alvarez Bravo, whom I had met at Spratling's, celebrated thirty years of work by this artist. Bravo works with subtlety and sobriety, qualities that perhaps don't reflect the brilliance, violence, and mystery of Mexico—at least for an outsider. I thought the best prints were of a dead worker in a "black sugar" strike at Tehuántepec, and of one of the Guanajuato mummies, very dark with three white teeth. The landscapes were too restrained—but perhaps, were I a Mexican, I'd prefer them that way.

Downstairs there was a group show of contemporary sculpture. Francisco Marín among the realists and Juan Soriano among the more abstract and experimental are talented. Marín is a brother of Diego Rivera's first wife, and Diego told me that he considers him Mexico's greatest sculptor. I had already seen his monumental memorial to the Zapatistas on the road to Cuernavaca, finding it strong but repellent. There is really nothing to compare in modern Mexican sculpture with Kearns and Baskin, Calder and David Smith. The Mexicans in this department seem to be very tentative, as though not quite sure of themselves, most of them reminding me of little Zorachs. Perhaps the overpowering presence of "Coatlicue" and the Maya reliefs is too much.

Perhaps the overpowering presence of the Big Four is also too much. At any rate, Mizrachi's gallery this afternoon was

featuring a new best-selling sensation who sports the hyphenated name of Orozco-Rivera. He paints precisely like—Tamayo!

March 17

Called on Vasconcelos this morning to say goodbye. I told him Siqueiros and Rivera were starting new murals to complete the project Orozco had begun at Chapultepec.

"I admired Orozco very much as a man," Vasconcelos said. "He was above all a *gentleman,* a man of honesty and rectitude and independence of mind. I find his art often grotesque. Now, with Diego, it is the opposite. I almost always enjoy his painting, but as a man I have no respect for him at all."

"And Siqueiros?" I asked.

"Siqueiros has just written me, asking me to endorse what he calls his 'Third Position'—something between Capitalism and Communism. I answered that I reaffirm my friendship for him but that I cannot endorse his politics because I have my own. My 'Third Position' is Christian Socialism."

* * *

I drove from the Ciudadela to Chapultepec to see whether Siqueiros might be at last actually working on that mural. He wasn't. This time he was directing the two workmen to reinforce the vinylite with strips of Fiberglas that looked like mosquito netting. This new device, he said, would require painting over all that had so far been painted. I asked him whether Diego would be having all this trouble when he begins his mural in the next room.

"No. Diego always uses fresco. But fresco won't last. This will. The walls, like all walls in Mexico, will shift, crack, and crumble. But here, all they'll have to do is carry this mural out, or peel off these Fiberglas strips, and there it is, as good as new, in a new building!"

I asked him about Vasconcelos' letter. He revealed more of its contents.

"Vasconcelos writes me that *his* way lies between 'the Bolshevism of Moscow' and 'the Bolshevism of Washington'!"

"Washington?"

"He is convinced that Roosevelt was a Bolshevist. And even Eisenhower, he now thinks, is a *little* bit Bolshevist!" He tossed his head back and roared.

"There *is* a similarity, perhaps," he said, "between American policy and the Soviet one, but I find it in the means rather than in the goals. I'd like someone to explain to me, for instance, why, when the Soviet Union uses tanks to put down rebellion in its front yard, that's 'bad'; but when *you* use planes and guns to arm a minority United Fruit Company rebellion against the government the Guatemalans themselves wanted, that's 'good'?"

April 2, San Miguel de Allende

We spent the last week in Mexico fighting our way into the finals of a tennis tournament at the French Club, and then losing. We spent the last day reloading the Jeep with the full burden it had carried down, and then adding to that twice as much again—our acquisitions of the past six months including several complete Indian wardrobes, a *traje de luces,* a dozen pictures, thirty pieces of statuary, and a hundred books. This time we won. With the help of a rooftop luggage carrier.

Arriving here for our first overnight stop, Don Bloom looked up at this towering trunk rack and asked innocently: "You'll have room for a few of our canvases?"

"How many?" I asked, calculating in my mind's eye the degree of sway on some of those hairpin curves ahead.

"Oh—about thirty-five," he said.

If he had said a dozen I might have balked. "Why not?" I said. "But where?"

"On top," he said, adding hopefully, "*some* of them don't have frames."

Mexico hasn't changed Don and June at all. Though they've rounded out a full year within a few hours' drive of both the capital and Guadalajara, they have yet to see an Orozco. In fact, Don remarked that he hopes the next scholarship he gets will permit him to paint at home without the distractions of moving and living in a foreign country. I told him that he might as well resign himself to being a formalist because his attitude toward Mexico was exactly like Matisse's toward the Marquesas—Matisse who had said that the only thing that interested him in

the exotic islands was the difference in the quality of light compared with the Brittany coast.

Don laughed. "Matisse isn't one of my boys," he said, "and I don't like being classified as a 'formalist.' Seriously, I think there can be content in one's work without one being interested in literary, historical, or even human subject matter."

Don—and June, too—are very talented painters, and they're a lot of fun to be with, so full of animal spirits, creative zest, and a sense of the ridiculous in themselves as well as others. I can't help feeling that their esthetic reticence is more a reflection of the current fear of commitment in the United States than any personal desire on their part to escape from coming to grips with human themes.

San Miguel seems more Americanized than ever, its scrubbed streets and carefully composed patios usurped by stiffly dressed, pale-faced bargain hunters. Even the Indians look a little more picturesque than necessary, a trifle self-consciously "posed" in their crumbling doorways.

At the home of one of our old friends we met an American career woman who had married a Mexican some twenty-five years ago and has lived in Mexico ever since, though they are now divorced. She was bitter about certain aspects of the Mexican character and told us two of her experiences to illustrate her conviction that a pervasive inferiority complex, with a concomitant envy of *gringos*, is the outstanding defective trait of the nation.

Our Mexican host, the least nationalistic of Mexicans, had just remarked that the *best* feature of Mexico was the freedom with which unorthodox opinions, even opinions critical of the President, are tolerated here.

"You can say that," she said, "but it is only true from your point of view, the point of view of a distinguished Mexican with plenty of money and a secure social position. Just let a taxi driver or a peasant criticize the government openly—or a foreigner!" Then she told her two stories.

"I was driving back to the capital one day in a taxi after a very hard day's work out on the Teotihuacán road when my car became tangled in a bicycle race coming *out* of the city. There was plenty of room for incoming traffic but the police

were forcing cars to park in the left lane. After being stalled there for over an hour, I got mad and remarked to my driver that what Mexico needed was fewer bicycle races and more civic responsibility. The man in the car in front of mine, who was standing near our taxi, overheard me. He came back with a policeman. 'This American,' he said, 'has insulted Mexico. She says we're a nation of savages.' I protested that that was not what I had said and appealed to my driver, who confirmed my actual words. This infuriated the policeman. Making as if to slap the driver across the face, he shouted: 'You traitor! You dare to sit there and defend a *gringa!*' Then he insisted that we drive to the nearest police station, where I was forced to face my accuser, and where the taxi driver was *not* permitted to testify as to what I had really said.

"My greatest mistake, I realized afterward, was in having protested that I was a Mexican citizen. Mexicans are *afraid* of American citizens, who get at least a measure of protection from the Ministry of Tourism, but an American like myself who has become a Mexican citizen gives them the perfect opportunity to express their pent-up anti-Americanism. I was fined 100 *pesos*. The next day, still furious, I told this story to some Mexican friends with real political power and asked them what steps I could take to recover the fine—not for the money, of course, but to secure justice. They laughed. The concept of justice simply doesn't exist. Being a Mexican citizen, I'd never get the 100 *pesos* back, they said, and I'd better forget the whole business.

"The second incident," she continued, "took place in a theater. I was with a Mexican woman. The man sitting in front of me was stamping his feet rhythmically on the floor so that it was impossible to hear what was being said. All around us people were glaring at him and saying 'Shhh!' He paid no attention. I asked him politely to desist and he didn't even bother to turn around. Finally I pushed hard with both knees against the back of his seat and he stopped the noise. When the play was over, he was waiting for me in the lobby with a policeman. 'This American woman,' he said, 'deliberately beat me over the head with her fists. I want her arrested.' Instantly my Mexican friend stepped forward and apologized profusely. 'My friend,' she said, 'didn't mean to be offensive. It's all the result of a misunder-

standing. We both apologize.' Satisfied, the noise maker shrugged his shoulders, accepted the apology, and departed."

April 4, San Luis Potosí

When we got ready to leave San Miguel this morning, we couldn't find Beebe anywhere. She wasn't in the Blooms' house. She wasn't on the street in front. Then I remembered where I'd found her the evening before. I looked in the doorway of a corner *tienda* that sells odds and ends of food, and there she was. Lifted up onto the counter, she was talking idiomatic Spanish like a native to a half-dozen Indian women and their children while they plied her with green *gelatinas* and candy. They had been teaching her a poem, which she proceeded to teach us, throwing up her arms in a typically Latin gesture of despair when we got a word out of place:

Esta mamacita,
Viene a la comida;
Este papacito,
Viene a trabajar;
Estes ermanitos
Vienen a la escuela;
Esta la chiquita:
Corre a jugar!

It's a curious thing how you notice only what you're prepared to see. Last week in Mexico, Goeritz showed me some photographs his wife had taken along the northern roads, of adobe bricks, out of which most Mexicans build their houses, stacked in pyramids and other geometric shapes resembling ancient buildings. This morning on the way here I noticed a score of these odd structures, though on the way down, on the same road, in October, they had completely escaped my attention.

I thought of Cárdenas twice on the road today. The first time was when we queued up for over an hour to get our share of the almost nonexistent supply of government gas in the northern provinces. To support the propaganda claim that Cárdenas' nationalization of the once American-owned properties has resulted in lower prices to consumers, PEMEX (lacking pipelines) actually buys American gas in Texas and sells it to motorists here at a loss.

The second time I thought of Cárdenas was as we entered this city, where Saturnino Cedillo had headed the abortive Catholic Church–landlords' rebellion eighteen years ago. It was in San Luis Potosí that Cárdenas, when President, had shown that almost reckless bravery which endeared him to the courage-worshiping *mestizos* quite as much as his concern for their social welfare. When he arrived here on May 18, 1938, files of soldiers lined the approach to the provincial palace of the rebellious state capital. Disdaining their protection, Cárdenas stepped alone into the crowd of thousands of fanatical Cedillistas and to their astonishment mounted the steps of Governor Cedillo's stronghold, came out on the balcony, and accused the former cabinet member of treason, demanding his surrender.

Cedillo, supported by a German agent, Baron von Merck, and (it is said) well financed by the American oil companies that hoped to unseat their formidable opponent in the presidential palace, retired to his ranch, Las Palomas, which he had turned into an arsenal. But the game was up. Cárdenas' bold move had caught him off guard. His popular support melted away. Cedillo was forced to fall back into the trackless mountains where the Huicholes gather their *peyote*. Few followed him. Cárdenas, the new-style revolutionary, had had more to offer than the old-style bandit. He had broken up forty-eight local *haciendas* and given the land to the very peasants who had been recruited by Cedillo. And instead of old-time promises of death before the firing squad, the President had offered amnesty to all who would surrender. On January 11, 1939, Cedillo was ambushed with a remnant of his followers. And on December 1, 1940, the radical Cárdenas, first president in Mexican history to retire from office voluntarily, turned over the reins of government to Manuel Ávila Camacho, a conservative.

April 5, Monterrey

While one can be sure that the recently opened three-lane superhighway linking Querétaro with Mexico City, and San Luis Potosí with this industrial metropolis of the north, is a boon to both tourism and the industrialization of the country, it will serve also to hasten the unhappy Americanization of Mexico. "Unhappy" not necessarily to the Mexicans themselves, who will

stand to gain a great deal in the economic "short run," but to such outsiders as myself who rejoice in Mexico's high flavor and unlikeness to America.

To be sure, this part of the country is little more than a chain of deserts inclosed in bare mountains, but the very speed with which one traverses it robs it of its melancholy grandeur. The individuality of the countryside, still so faithfully reflected in the people and their dress from Querétaro south, is eliminated here once and for all.

One thing was clear enough, I thought, as we ticked off fifty to sixty miles of this bleak terrain every hour for hours on end: Mexico lost its border provinces—Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California—not so much because of the corrupt incompetence of the Bustamentes and Santa Annas, or the sly cupidity of the Jacksons and Polks, as because of the sheer commercial-strategic impossibility of maintaining communication with them before the age of roads and railways.

Even today, Monterrey is more American than Mexican. Its Colonial cathedral is swallowed up in the proliferation of motels, factories, quick-lunch rooms, and curio shops. And Enrique de la Mora's handsome modern concrete church, with its angular bronze saints strung across a hangarlike façade, is more International than Mexican.

We saw a vaudeville on the Avenida Madero before turning in. Considering the four-*peso* admission and the fewer than a hundred customers filling a third of the seats, it was amazing that the twenty-odd performers could be paid. There was a ten-piece orchestra—and a good one, too. We watched a skit about the modernization of Monterrey and a rather amateurish number entitled "1925," in which awkward ballerinas and their straw-hatted swains danced the Charleston interminably. The audience was appreciative, and Beebe was enthralled. Only we were depressed.

There was a moment during one of the skits when the audience participated freely in the dialogue and an actor asked rhetorically: "What's wrong with Monterrey today—?" Maia answered: "Too many *gringos!*" and there was a total lack of response. I thought about this afterward and came to the conclusion that they had spotted us as Americans; being Mexicans,

gallant and considerate of the feelings of others, the last thing they would want to do was show us that they joined in (or even approved) an expression of anti-Americanism—even if they felt it themselves.

April 6, San Antonio, Texas

Crossing the border at Reynoso and preparing to fill out the U. S. Customs declaration, I noticed with surprise the name of Mexico's hero of the Independence at the top of the form.

"Is this town called Hidalgo?" I asked the guard.

"*Heye*-dalgo," he corrected me.

The Mexican border official had been too easygoing, or too polite, or too kind, to inspect our incredibly loaded station wagon. Especially after we had greeted him in Spanish and told him how much we had enjoyed our six months in his country. The American official said:

"O.K. Get out. Open everything in the car—and I mean *everything*."

It is the price one pays for an efficiently run country.

Everything south of Reynoso had been unfenced, dusty, barren, crumbling, given over to beautifully flowering cactus. No sooner had we taken off on Route 281 North than the fences were in perfect order, the houses painted and in good repair (and fearfully ugly), the fields completely cleared of weeds and cactus, symmetrically planted with every imaginable semi-tropical crop, flourishing. Route 281 is as smooth as velvet. In fact, we had to drink coffee to keep awake, as the only variation in the monotony of the flat landscape was one town exactly like another every fifty or so miles.

We made our first stop at a streamlined lunch room which advertised "Foot-long Hot-dogs." The milk tasted as if it had come out of an aluminum cow—as indeed it had. Over the counter behind this forbidding box hung a sign reading, "Why is it everything I like is either immoral, illegal, or fattening?" On a table to one side was a variety of local curios. China salt-and-pepper shakers a hideous mauve pink, shaped like ducks. A yellow souvenir back scratcher bearing the legend "Texas—Come Back!" A small table lamp ($7.50) with an old-fashioned steam engine painted on the shade in such a way as to make the

smoke and steam appear to move. A thermometer in the form of a gilded anchor with imitation diamonds. A nickel dispenser of Elvis Presley buttons. Postcards with simpering, half-naked blondes, over rhymes such as

> Women? I'm off the women. They're always the same
> Cheatin' or lyin' or playin' some game.
> They're nothin' but trouble, and bad luck too.
> Say! Who's the blonde? Woo! Woo!

I remembered, as we continued deeper into Texas, Frank Lloyd Wright telling me last year that in America, education isn't on speaking terms with culture, and I wondered how America from here on out can be expected to produce an indigenous culture. A hundred years ago, or even fifty, yes; but today? With "Jesus Saves!" signs popping off and on in neons and the creative imagination degraded to inventing such trade names (for bread) as "Holsum"—where is it to come from?

* * *

Brooding darkly in this vein, and half aware that I was but reacting unmercifully to the violent shift of environment for which six months' absence had ill prepared me, I continued driving toward San Antonio.

I don't know whether it is fitting that this journal should end with the Alamo, but that is where it ended. How much of the old fortress remains in the many restorations it has undergone, is hard to determine. The grounds are well kept and ivy creeps gracefully along the yellow walls. Inside are cabinets of mementoes and bronze plaques bearing the names of the 183 heroes who fell before Santa Anna's legions.

A 64-page booklet, *The Alamo*, sold on the premises, is not a credit to Texas. Neither in its scholarship, its grammar, its typography, its culture, nor its sense of fair play. One would not guess, from reading it, that Texas in 1836 was a province of Mexico. Nor that the army sent to keep it from falling into American hands consisted of brave men doing their duty.

Nevertheless, there is no denying that Travis, Crockett, Bowie, and the other Texan adventurers were brave men too. They died heroically for what they deemed ideals of independence and justice. The oft-told tale of Travis drawing a line in the dirt, giving those who did not choose to cross it the opportunity to make their escape, and of the stricken Bowie demanding that he be carried across the line in his bed—all this is stirring. There is no denying either that Santa Anna was a scoundrel; if he was cast in the role of a patriot at the Alamo, he cut a sorry figure shortly thereafter at San Jacinto and an even sorrier one a decade later at Chapultepec, when he might have annihilated General Winfield Scott's invaders and instead stood aside to let the *niños héroes* fall and a third of his country be snatched away.

Perhaps the truth is that both sides, between 1836 and 1848, acted with thorough immorality but that even if the Mexicans had been ruled by patriots or even saints, we would still have found "just" reasons to take what we wanted and, being the stronger, would have gotten it. That being the case, it is *we* who should bend over backwards in acknowledging our real motives and, especially in such a shrine as the Alamo, attempt to tell the truth.

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